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# THE NATIONAL INTEREST

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*Richard H. Kohn*

## Culture, Growth, and Democracy
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A Question of Linkages—*Irwin Stelzer*

## The Decline of Britain
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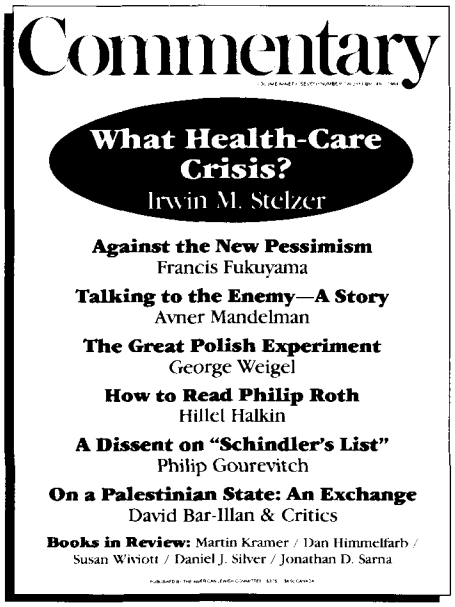
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THE NATIONAL INTEREST

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# Out of Control

## *The Crisis in Civil-Military Relations*

Richard H. Kohn

THE U.S. MILITARY is now more alienated from its civilian leadership than at any time in American history, and more vocal about it.

The warning signs are very clear, most noticeably in the frequency with which officers have expressed disgust for the President over the last year.

When Clinton visited the carrier *Theodore Roosevelt*, the Atlantic Fleet commander had to arrive at the ship beforehand to assure a proper reception. The Air Force Chief of Staff had to issue an open demand to his service to respect the President and for proper behavior to be accorded him—and still had to retire a two-star general for disparaging remarks made in public. At the Army's elite Command and General Staff College, a respected Congressman was "jeered" by the class when he "repeatedly lectured officers" about Congress's role and powers—and was greeted by "catcalls" at the mention of the President (*Kansas City Star*, April 17, 1993.)

Richard H. Kohn chairs the Curriculum in Peace, War, and Defense at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. From 1981 to 1991 the Chief of Air Force History for the USAF, he recently completed two terms as president of the Society for Military History. He edited *The United States Military Under the Constitution of the United States, 1789-1989* published by New York University Press in 1991.

But the problem goes much deeper, sometimes manifest in small symbols. When Senator Strom Thurmond was introduced for an award at the Association of the United States Army last fall, and the speaker noted Thurmond's change of party from the Democrats to the Republicans in 1964, the audience burst into applause, an open sign of just how partisan the military has become in the last generation. There was, in the wake of the Somalia disaster, a concerted effort to undermine Les Aspin, fed by criticism from within the Pentagon's uniformed ranks, aided and abetted by a steady stream of rumors and leaks in the *Washington Times*. (Ten years ago when I asked that paper's first editor what the perspective of the new newspaper was, she replied, "Pro-military.")

An Air Force legal officer wrote a thesis at the prestigious National War College hypothesizing the conditions that could lead to a coup—something officers *never* mention in public and barely ever whisper in private—and won the top writing prize, and publication in the Army's leading professional journal.

Last year one of the senior commanders from the Gulf War described a mistake in combat that, he believed at the time it happened, would bring down restrictions on his operational freedom of action. After reporting the problem up his chain of command, he said, he waited to hear that the "the Deputy Undersecretary for Sewage Disposal and Family Housing" had recommended the



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limitations. It never happened, but what was striking was the attitude of that commander toward civilian control.

WHILE THESE incidents have put the problem in high relief, the roots of the crisis go back to the beginning of the Cold War, when the creation of a large, "peacetime" standing military establishment overloaded the traditional process by which civilian control was exercised. By the end of Eisenhower's presidency, the situation had so deteriorated that the only soldier-president of the twentieth century left office warning of the danger to democracy of a "military-industrial complex."[1]

During the Kennedy and Johnson administrations in the 1960s, Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara restored a degree of civilian control, but for a generation after, in response to his heavy-handed efforts and the rending divisions of Vietnam, successive Republican administrations weakened these controls. Military affairs became highly politicized in more partisan ways. Simultaneously, and for partly the same reasons, the professional officer corps also became politicized and partisan. Divorced now from broad parts of American society, the military, increasingly Washington-wise, was determined never again to be committed to combat without the resources, public support, and freedom on the battlefield to win.

By Bill Clinton's inauguration a year ago, the military had accepted "downsizing" and reorganization, but not changes that invaded too dramatically the traditional functions of each of the individual armed services, or that changed too radically the social composition of the forces, or cut too deeply into combat readiness, or otherwise undermined the quality and ability of the military to fulfill its functions. In Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Colin L. Powell, the military had its most formidable leader since the Second World War. And in Bill Clinton, the administration had a president with less experience, interest, understanding, and credibility in military affairs than any since the 1920s.

## *The Consequences of Growth*

THE BREAKDOWN in the peacetime balance between civilian and military began in the late 1940s, when the military establishment grew so large, warfare so complex, and the threat to the United States so unprecedented that neither Congress nor the Secretary of Defense had the staff to determine the proper policies, strategies, size, structure, and budget for national security, or even to administer the defense establishment and decide upon an appropriate division of function and authority between civilian and military.

By the 1950s the new standing military establishment had begun to penetrate into every aspect of American life. Because of the draft, every able-bodied American man was eligible, for the first peacetime period in American history, for military service. American military forces—land, sea, and air—were now deployed around the world and allied to foreign establishments, again for the first time in American history. This gargantuan establishment consumed weapons and food and other materiel in such quantities as to require a network of arms producers and business suppliers that touched every community in the nation. Its very size gave the military unexpected influence over the nation's foreign policy and domestic affairs. The institutions were simply too large, their activities too diverse, and their influence too pervasive for effective oversight by the normal legislative or bureaucratic procedures traditionally used by civilians on Capitol Hill and in the executive branch.

Furthermore, the civilian leadership after World War II faced military problems

[1]Samuel P. Huntington, in his now classic *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957), titled Part III "The Crisis of American Civil-Military Relations, 1940-1955."



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unprecedented in scope and complexity. Military issues now assumed great prominence in American politics, if for no other reason than their impact on the government's expenditures. Reigning economic theory warned against massive deficit spending, which for most of the 1940s and 1950s put the military under great budgetary pressure, thus pitting the military leadership against successive presidential administrations. War was now a joint enterprise requiring the cooperation of land, sea, and air forces, but how to organize them and how to divide responsibilities while still insuring trained, effective, ready forces, under one responsible commander, was unclear.

The services themselves—fully formed, coherent, and cohesive bureaucracies with comprehensive doctrines, many powerful friends and constituencies, and enormous prestige and credibility from the winning of World War II—fell into vicious internal fights over roles and missions, exacerbated by the President's insistence on severely limiting the funds available for defense. The worst battle over roles and missions the country ever experienced occurred between 1946 and 1949. When civilian leadership in the Pentagon and the White House could not contain the services' struggle for survival and resources, the disputes boiled over into Congress and the press, the Navy leadership erupted into open revolt over purchase of a new class of aircraft carrier, and the strain drove the first Secretary of Defense from office and contributed to his suicide a few weeks later.

Another new factor affecting civil-military relations was atomic weapons. It was now imperative to take authority to use these weapons away from the military, lest operational commanders displace Congress and the President in determining whether the country would go to war. Special procedures were instituted to insure presidential control over their use, but this, combined with worries about U.S. and Soviet forces coming into conflict during normal operations in hot spots around the globe, now required civilians to invade traditional military operational authority. During the 1950s and after, the line between civilian and military was increasingly blurred, the military having to learn business management and other civilian skills and values, while civilians had to become versed in military strategy and operations.

The tension worsened with the advent of limited war, first in Korea, then in Vietnam. No longer could civilian authorities afford to allow commanders in the field to make the broader operational decisions concerning when, where, and how to fight an enemy, since control of operations might prevent the widening of war, or prevent regional confrontations from escalating, or stop the use of atomic and nuclear weapons. This circumscribing of traditional military prerogatives burst into open crisis in the Korean War in 1950-51, when the legendary Douglas MacArthur resisted the restrictive rules of engagement, attempted to control policy, and was fired by President Truman. Other controls over military authority less than fifteen years later in Vietnam, in many operational and tactical areas and in far more intrusive and restrictive ways, caused enormous stress between military leaders and their civilian masters, with consequences still felt today.

The effort on the part of the Kennedy-Johnson administrations in the early 1960s, in the person of Robert McNamara, to regain control over the military establishment—over not only its use in conflict but every aspect of military policy and affairs—marked the most important turning point in the postwar history of civilian control. The significance of the McNamara years was really the re-imposition of civilian control through bureaucratic procedures and structures, the traditional method for exercising presidential authority over the military in peacetime. McNamara's Programming-Planning-Budgeting System, his "Whiz Kids" operations analysts, his "management



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by objectives," all attempted to link policy with military strategy and then force structure, so as to produce a military establishment that would achieve America's Cold War objectives at affordable costs.

He believed that civilians, not the military services, should decide these things, all the way down to the nature and numbers of American weapons, the process for discovering, developing, and purchasing them, and the policies and procedures for their use—especially the nuclear deterrent. McNamara shifted power from the armed services to the Office of the Secretary of Defense. He ignored or dismissed military advice, disparaged military experience and expertise, and circumvented or sacked generals and admirals who opposed him. The warfare inside the Pentagon was intense and vicious.

At the very same time, the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, desperately afraid that military recklessness would provoke a nuclear war with the Soviet Union, moved in the wake of the unsuccessful Bay of Pigs operation of 1961 and the successful (but carefully controlled) confrontation with the Soviets in the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962, to impose the same restraints on military operations. They did so not just in nuclear matters but in conventional war, and particularly in Vietnam.

These events, particularly President Johnson's choosing of bombing targets in North Vietnam and the restrictive rules McNamara imposed on the fighting at every level, opened a chasm between military and civilian over the command and control of military operations. Civilians believed that they were limiting the fighting in order to avoid Soviet or Chinese intervention, and molding military operations to the political objectives of defeating an insurgency and securing a non-communist South Vietnam. Military officers believed arrogant, uninformed, irresponsible politicians were not only preventing the winning of the war, but squandering American resources, and worse, lives. The experience still rankles military officers today.

The reaction against McNamara's administration of the Pentagon reversed the trend toward greater civilian control. McNamara provoked a tremendous backlash from the military and its friends on both sides of the aisle in Congress. For twenty of the next twenty-four years (1969-1993), successive Republican administrations loosened the restrictions and permitted the military greater authority inside the Pentagon and out in the field. The reasons were many: reaction to McNamara's rigid decision-making methods and peremptory dismissal of military judgment (which was seen as partly responsible for the defeat in Southeast Asia); the need to soften civil-military tensions during the latter stages of a deeply divisive war; the desire during the 1980s to rebuild the military's confidence and battlefield effectiveness; and finally sheer partisanship.

## *Post-Vietnam Syndromes*

THE 1960s constituted a political divide in military affairs in two other important, related respects. First, national security became a matter of intense partisanship. The Republicans supported high military spending, confrontation with the Soviets, and military interventions overseas—stressing "patriotism" and "a strong national defense." The Democrats, so divided by Vietnam, opposed interventions and tried repeatedly to cut military spending and influence to the bone.

Second, the military itself began to change in the 1960s, but instead of dividing, it came together. In retaliation against McNamara and the left wing of the Democratic party, the senior leadership closed ranks and muted the open warfare in the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS). It began to unite against the Secretary and to maneuver inside the executive branch and with Congress for the policies and resources it believed important. For example, in the



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1970s, faced with inadequate funding, the senior leadership agreed to gut readiness in exchange for force structure and weapons modernization. To cite another example, the Army organized its divisions with "roundout" brigades from the reserve forces so that the country could not go to war without mobilizing the reserves, and thus (so the thinking went) public support.

At the same time, the professional military became politicized, abandoning its century-and-a-half tradition of non-partisanship. It began thinking, voting, and even espousing Republicanism with a capital R. Jimmy Carter's contemptuously anti-military administration only exacerbated the trend. Furthermore, this was a different military. In the wake of Vietnam, the officer corps began to attract a larger percentage of its people from the most traditional or conservative parts of the country. The switch from the draft to all-volunteer forces further diminished whatever ideological diversity had existed in the officer corps. The military became even more traditional in its values: Republican, conservative, and increasingly conscious of itself as a separate entity in American society. A politicized military and a much more partisan division over national security would prove to be a dangerous combination.

It must be borne in mind that, under the Constitution, the military actually answers to two civilian masters, the President and Congress. For most of American history, serious civil-military friction has occurred mainly inside the executive branch, between the President and the military or between Secretaries of War or the Navy and their uniformed subordinates. To be sure, there has been conflict between Congress and the military, but until the 1960s it existed largely out of the public eye. Congress exercised its proper role of oversight and appropriation with its usual caprice (the military view) and the military reacted with the usual mixture of deference, awe, supplication, and (private) contempt.

Beginning in the 1960s, however, the Democratic majorities in Congress grew increasing frustrated trying to unravel the enormous and complicated military budget requests (just as George C. Marshall had hoped in the 1940s, when he argued for a unified department of defense). Congress responded by adding staff, and by the 1980s Congress and the Pentagon had become locked in a kind of continuous subterranean brawl, never open enough to alert the cops (i.e. the press or the public), but warfare nonetheless, on all sorts of issues, minor and major. Congress tried to exercise its oversight and policy function, and save money for social programs. The Pentagon tried to escape the kind of micromanagement, the rules and regulations, that it found increasingly burdensome, expensive, inefficient, and sometimes even dangerous.

Before the 1960s, the military had occasionally played the President off against the Congress—the young turk naval officers agitating for a steel and steam navy in the 1880s, the epic battles of Adjutant General Fred C. Ainsworth to avoid or cripple the General Staff early in the twentieth century, the Air Corps' use of the press and Congress to try to gain its independence in the 1920s and 1930s, and others. But now, in the Cold War, and especially in response to McNamara and Vietnam, the military refined into art the pitting of Congress and President against each other, in pursuit of its own ends, particularly larger budgets and newer weapons. More than ever before in American history, civilian control of the military became a three-cornered game, with the military playing one branch off against the other. The result was less civilian control.

## *Enter the Chairman*

THE TWELVE years of Republican rule beginning in 1981 accelerated these trends and further weakened the relative weight of the civilians. It was not that Caspar Weinberger was a weak Secretary of



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Defense. He was certainly decisive. But he conceived his role as chief cheerleader for Ronald Reagan's military buildup and as the procurer of appropriations from a reluctant, Democratic Congress. He showered money on the services and, in an effort to get it spent, gave them considerable authority over its use, frequently ignoring or circumventing his own office of Program Analysis and Evaluation, one of the chief tools McNamara had used to vet the recommendations of the military services. After an initial two years in which much loose talk about the use of American forces, particularly in the nuclear arena, aroused considerable concern and caused the military itself to become much more cautious, Weinberger in a milestone speech adopted the military's views about intervention and the use of troops abroad—listing six conditions that had to be met before the country should commit its forces to combat. Weinberger rebuilt the military: the forces, the institution, and with President Reagan's help, the pride and the image in American consciousness.

Reagan and Weinberger frankly and purposefully became the military's advocates—and powerful and effective ones they were. Military influence on policy and the military's status in society rose accordingly. This twelve years of Republican rule was the longest one-party string of years since Franklin D. Roosevelt. It coincided with an enormous reaction to the Vietnam War, the desire to give the military more rope and respect, and an exorcism of the anti-military binge of the 1960s and 1970s.

Into this situation stepped a new set of military leaders. As Admiral Crowe, who was Chairman of the Joint Chiefs from 1985 to 1989, says in his memoirs, "Few officers these days made it into the higher ranks without a firm grasp of international relations, congressional politics, and public affairs....The old military was gone." Crowe himself chose to play an "inside" game as Chairman, using his position and influence quietly and cautiously, especially when he disagreed with his civilian superiors.

On the Goldwater-Nichols proposal to strengthen cooperation between the armed forces and the powers of the Chairman by making him principal military adviser to the President and Secretary of Defense, Crowe remembers that "Somehow . . . I had to do what I could to encourage [it]" even though Weinberger and the Chiefs opposed it. Crowe's strategy "was to stay out of the public debate while doing what I could behind the scenes."

Crowe used his position to influence foreign policy. He threw his weight behind American ships escorting Kuwaiti tankers through the Iran-Iraq conflict in the Persian Gulf because he thought it was positive for American interests in the region—as though the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs is supposed to have an independent voice on matters of foreign policy. He played off Secretary of State George Schultz against Weinberger in order to develop a relationship with his Soviet counterpart, Marshal Sergei Akhromeyev, even though Weinberger opposed it, going so far as to set up a private, secret channel of communication to help avoid war. Crowe and the Chiefs worked very hard to rein in Reagan's pet project, the Strategic Defense Initiative, seeking to lower both its profile and funding. Crowe in his memoirs is quite open about all this—as well as about his conscious cultivation of the press and the military's manipulation of Congress.[2]

But Crowe's expanded power, which he says he increased consciously, was used mostly behind the scenes, inside the bureaucracy, a subtle push here or a spin there, on one policy initiative or another. General Colin L.

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[2]Admiral William J. Crowe, Jr., *The Line of Fire: From Washington to the Gulf, the Politics and Battles of the New Military* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993), pp. 177, 180-185, 212-241, 272, 299-319, 337, 345; see also Bob Woodward, *The Commanders* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991), p. 40.



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Powell, who succeeded Crowe in 1989, was much bolder. If civilian control is defined first by the relative influence of the military as opposed to civilians in military affairs, and second by the appropriateness of the areas in which the military exercises its influence, then it was under Colin Powell's tenure that civilian control eroded most since the rise of the military establishment in the 1940s and 1950s.

## *The Power of Powell*

COLIN POWELL has been the most powerful military leader since George C. Marshall, the most popular since Dwight D. Eisenhower, and the most political since Douglas MacArthur. Except for four brief command assignments (none longer than fifteen months), Powell served in Washington from 1969 until his retirement in 1993. He held a succession of increasingly powerful, and political, jobs, including Senior Military Assistant to the Secretary of Defense and President Reagan's National Security Adviser. His power had many sources: his experience, his shrewdness and adeptness, his personal charm and charisma, the web of contacts of people who knew and trusted him, his obscurity-to-fame personal story, his race.

His power was expanded by the utter success of American forces in interventions during his tenure (particularly the Gulf War, with its seemingly decisive results and its unbelievably low American casualties), and, most of all, by the new powers imparted to his office by the Goldwater-Nichols law. The law assigns to the Chairman, rather than to the Chiefs as a whole, the planning and policy formulation for the uniformed military. He now controls the Joint Staff with the help of a Vice Chairman, the second-ranking American military officer. No longer required to have the Chiefs vote on issues or present composite advice to civilian superiors, the Chairman can act on his own on all issues and functions, as the single point of advice to the Secretary of Defense and President, unless they specifically ask for other views, and the Chairman is free to represent his own thinking, rather than that of the Chiefs. For all these reasons, Colin Powell became the most formidable military figure in this country in two generations.[3]

But what was striking was his willingness to use his power and wield his influence, and his effectiveness in doing so. One leading national reporter called Powell "a formidable bureaucratic foe who knows how to manipulate Congress, the media, interest groups and public opinion."[4] One of his own four-stars, who worked for him on the Joint Staff, echoed this: "the master of the Washington bureaucracy."[5]

Even before assuming the chairmanship in the fall of 1989, Powell concluded that the Cold War was over and that fundamental changes in American strategy and force structure were necessary. Without any authorization from superiors, he developed a set of concepts designed to reconfigure the entire military establishment. He pushed his vision of a new national strategy and significantly reduced and revamped military services.

In effect, General Powell—not the President, nor the National Security Council, nor the Department of Defense—thought through a new national security policy for the

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[3]Powell's career can be followed in Howard Means, *Colin Powell: Soldier/Statesman, Statesman/Soldier* (New York: Donald I. Fine, Inc., 1992), pp. 163-179, 187ff; David Roth, *Sacred Honor: A Biography of Colin Powell* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1993), pp. 90ff. The latter volume, written by one of Powell's former public affairs officers and copyrighted by the General himself, uses the term "political general" to describe him. See also, Kurt Campbell's "All Rise for Chairman Powell," *The National Interest*, Spring 1991.

[4]Steven B. Roberts, with Bruce B. Auster, "Colin Powell Superstar: From the Pentagon to the White House?" *U.S. News & World Report*, Sept. 20, 1993, p. 51.

[5]General George Lee Butler, "Disestablishing SAC," *Air Power History*, Fall 1993, p. 10.



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country, one based on his own political and international forecasts about Soviet collapse, de-communization in Eastern Europe, German unification, accelerated arms reductions, lessened tensions, and a new focus by the United States on regional conflicts rather than worldwide confrontation with the Soviet Union. The General did not consult the other Chiefs and circumvented the established programming/budgeting procedures in place in the Defense Department since the early 1960s. He developed his plans without any guidance from the President or Secretary of Defense, and he sold the plan to the White House and Congress, in spite of Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney's initial disagreement with its assumptions about the Soviet threat and opposition from other senior Pentagon civilians.

Powell's goal was to maintain a strong defense and America's superpower status. He even went so far as to advocate a public campaign in order to forestall "a movement toward isolationism" on the part of the American people or Congress. In the spring of 1990, he set the campaign in motion. Partly he wanted to "deflect criticism that the Defense Department wasn't responding to the changed strategic situation," and partly he wished to pre-empt Senator Sam Nunn's announced intention to address the nation's new defense needs from Capitol Hill.

Powell's larger motives, however, were to establish a floor for the defense cuts he knew to be inevitable, and to work out a coherent strategy and force structure which would prevent the kind of helter-skelter, debilitating reductions common to previous demobilizations after American wars. The result, according to the historian of his effort, "was the first change in national strategy in over forty years and a commitment to restructure the armed forces to support that strategy." Thus in the first two years as Chairman, without guidance from above, Powell pushed through the most significant changes in our military establishment since the 1940s.[6]

Powell was only filling a vacuum, because George Bush's National Security Council, James Baker's State Department, and Dick Cheney's Defense Department were so devoid of a vision of the future international system, that their only response to the growing pressures from Congress and the public for new foreign and national security policies was a slogan called "the new world order" and Powell's temporarily salable 25 percent reduction of the military establishment. The irony of Powell's power was that Secretary Cheney apparently came into his office in 1989 extremely sensitive to civilian control, having been told by congressional colleagues that the military were out of control under Caspar Weinberger. Cheney, determined to assert his authority, thereupon publicly lashed out at his Air Force Chief of Staff for negotiating on his own—"freelancing"—a deal with Congress over strategic weapons. The charge was untrue, which Cheney soon learned (if he did not know beforehand), but he kept up the pressure by privately reprimanding the CINCSAC for his public statements. The following year Cheney summarily fired Air Force Chief of Staff Michael Dugan for statements reported in the press about targeting during the Gulf War. Many in the Air Force to this day suspect Powell of encouraging the sacking because General Dugan had visited the war theater before the Chairman, taking reporters along with him, and because Dugan had proved to be an all-too-effective advocate for air power.[7]

General Powell used his power and

[6]Lorna S. Jaffe, *The Development of the Base Force, 1989-1992* (Washington: Joint History Office, Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, July 1993), pp. 11-50. Quotations are from pp. 22-23, 28, and 50. For a first-hand look at Powell's actions, from a general who helped him make these changes, see Butler, "Disestablishing SAC," p. 7.

[7]For Cheney's sensitivity to civilian control, see Woodward, *Commanders*, pp. 74-80, 108-109, 110, 290-296.



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authority again during the Gulf War. If Bob Woodward's 1991 book *The Commanders* can be believed, and no one has disputed its facts, Powell together with General Schwarzkopf consistently maneuvered to delay the war, to mount overwhelming force, to demand the clearest guidance and direction, and to limit the political objectives. Much research remains to be done on this point, but the literature indicates that the Chairman was a reluctant interventionist who made extraordinary efforts to control his civilian superiors' inclinations to make strategy and to move rapidly into combat.

Certainly General Powell worked hard to prevent the Air Force from selling the administration on an independent air campaign. So effectively did he block briefings up the line that the Undersecretary of Defense for Policy, Paul Wolfowitz, had to hear the Instant Thunder air campaign plan through a casual, off-line invitation to visit Air Force Secretary Donald Rice's office. The President was so insulated that when, over Christmas at Camp David, he heard for the first time what Air Force Chief of Staff Merrill McPeak said the Air Force could do, the President turned in disbelief to National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft and asked whether McPeak was "for real."

Certainly Powell exercised the same control over Schwarzkopf, who, according to the latter's memoirs, was prohibited by Powell from coming to Washington to brief his own offensive campaign plan. Schwarzkopf communicated with Washington only through Powell (which Schwarzkopf says had advantages but was "unnerving at times, because it kept me in the dark"), and apparently never discussed his activity, plans, or actions with Cheney or Bush unless the latter were visiting the theater. All of this was within the letter of the Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986, but hardly within its spirit ("An Act to reorganize the Department of Defense and strengthen civilian authority...").[8]

Goldwater-Nichols strengthened the Chairman by making him principal military adviser to the President and Secretary of Defense, but explicitly designated the chain of command from the President through the Secretary of Defense to the combatant commander, leaving the Chairman out purposely and denying him command authority "over the Joint Chiefs of Staff or any of the armed forces." He is supposed to function as a link in communication between President, Secretary of Defense and field commander only if the President specifically so directs. The truth is that Powell tailored all of his actions in the Gulf War to fit the system of command and control he was then instituting in the Pentagon for the post-Cold War world: according to a senior officer involved, "to give the N[ational] C[ommand] A[uthorities] no options...to control the discussion by presenting just one approach, which was the option of his choice."

Astoundingly, Powell later boasted about reversing the relationship between national goals and military means, turning the age-old Clausewitzian formula about war being an extension of policy on its head: "our [the Joint Chiefs'] military advice was shaping political judgments from the very beginning....[W]e were able to constantly bring the political decisions back to what we could do militarily. And if there's one story that is going to be written out of Desert Storm and Just Cause and everything else we've done, it's how political objectives must be carefully matched to military objectives

[8]Powell admits his role freely, claiming that his interposition in the chain of command was one reason why the war was so successful. Roth, *Sacred Honor*, pp. 195-202. For Schwarzkopf's perspective, see his *General H. Norman Schwarzkopf, The Autobiography: It Doesn't Take a Hero* (New York: Bantam Books, 1992), pp. 297-302, 325-326, 358-362, 366-370, 381, 386-387.



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and military means and what is achievable."[9]

Even more troubling, General Powell took it upon himself to be the arbiter of American military intervention overseas, an unprecedented policy role for a senior military officer, and the most explicit intrusion into policy since MacArthur's conflict with Truman. It was Powell, as Senior Military Assistant, who oversaw the writing of Weinberger's 1984 speech outlining the six criteria for American intervention abroad.[10] According to *Washington Post* reporter Don Oberdorfer, Powell resisted intervention in Somalia for at least four months, but surprised the Bush administration by reversing himself, and within a month American soldiers were on the ground.[11] Powell's public statements on the subject in the last two years have been increasingly bold. Under his leadership, the uniformed military gained an enormous public voice on the subject of when, where, and in what circumstances American military power should be used. His opposition to intervention in Bosnia now approaches legend; perhaps more than any single individual he restrained first the Bush, and then the Clinton, administrations from action.

Many became uncomfortable at this military intrusion into foreign policy, particularly when General Powell published, at the height of the presidential campaign in 1992, a *New York Times* op-ed piece, warning explicitly against intervention in Bosnia.[12] Even more unfortunate was an article in *Foreign Affairs* in the Winter 1992-93 issue, the timing of which constituted a clear, public declaration of principles from the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs to an incoming president who ran and won on an exclusively domestic agenda, who possessed little foreign policy experience, and no credibility in military affairs. The uniformed head of the American armed forces defined the American role in the world, commented on American society, and asserted that "I share responsibility for America's security...with the president and commander in chief, with the secretary of defense and with the magnificent men and women—volunteers all—of America's armed forces." In this article, the General claimed that our nation is "obligated to lead" in the world, and then he repeated the Weinberger formula of conditions, processes, and methods under which American forces can be used to intervene. In its defense of past actions, a defeated administration's policies, and its strictures for the future, General Powell was offering his own views on foreign policy, in contravention to the tradition of American

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[9]Quoted in Roth, *Sacred Honor*, pp. 195-196. In his last National Press Club appearance in uniform, Powell said, "My philosophy in all this is rather simple: match political expectations to military means in a wholly realistic way. Don't slide in, don't mislead yourself. This isn't some syndrome I'm suffering from. It comes from 35 years of experience. As a first lieutenant, I saw what doing otherwise was—results were in the Bay of Pigs—President Kennedy. As a major and a captain and a Lieutenant colonel, I saw what doing otherwise produced in Vietnam. And in Beirut as a major general in 1983, I saw what doing otherwise can result in." Reuter Transcript Report, National Press Club Luncheon Speaker General Colin Powell, National Press Club Ballroom, Sept. 28, 1993.

[10]Barton Gellman, "Powell Resumes Civilian Life After 35 Years," *Washington Post*, Oct. 1, 1993, p. 21. Gellman states that Powell wrote the speech, but apparently the General only "facilitated" its production.

[11]Don Oberdorfer, "The Path to Intervention," *Washington Post*, Dec. 6, 1993, p. 1.

[12]"Why Generals Get Nervous," *New York Times*, Oct. 8, 1992; for an analysis of the General's behavior, see Russell F. Weigley, "The American Military and the Principle of Civilian Control from McClellan to Powell," *Journal of Military History*, 57, No. 5 (Special Issue, October 1993), pp. 28-30.



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civil military relations since the beginning of the republic.[13]

## *Mutiny in the Ranks*

THE VERY WORST breach of civilian control occurred just after Bill Clinton's election on the question of homosexuals serving openly in the armed forces. General Powell knew of President-elect Clinton's position. Powell had for a year taken very public stances in support of the existing policy on excluding homosexuals, in spite of the comparison with earlier discrimination against African-Americans and the heat he must have taken from civil rights advocates and allies in the African-American community. General Powell must have felt very strongly indeed on this subject, for he virtually defied the President-elect, never denying publicly the rumors in November-December 1992 that he might resign over the issue, doing nothing to scotch rumors that his fellow chiefs might do the same, doing nothing to discourage retired generals from lobbying on Capitol Hill to form an alliance against lifting the ban. General Powell and the Joint Chiefs then appeared to negotiate publicly with the President at a meeting in late January 1993—and privately through the Secretary of Defense, the press, and Congress—for the compromise finally forced on Bill Clinton last summer. On this issue, the military leadership took full advantage of a young, incoming president with extraordinarily weak authority in military affairs. Nothing did more to harm the launching of the Clinton administration than "gays in the military," for it announced to Washington and the world that the President could be rolled. If the one group pledged by law and tradition to obey could roll him, then everyone could—or at least could try.

Almost forgotten in this great public imbroglio that same January is the fact that General Powell also issued a watered-down roles and missions report to the Congress after a public call for study and change by Senator Sam Nunn. Under Goldwater-Nichols, the Chairman must periodically study the services (and report to Congress), and perhaps revise their relative roles and missions. These are enormously sensitive issues, for roles and missions mean money and forces. Apparently Powell was more willing to battle the new President over homosexuals and ignore the Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee on roles and missions, rather than confront the service chiefs, for he allowed them to delete the most most meaningful proposals for change. As a result, at a time of presidential transition when civilian authority was vulnerable, General Powell was "in the face" of the two most powerful civilians in military affairs.

The implications of this behavior at the beginning of the Clinton administration were enormous. Defiance at the top led to resistance all down the line, and, even more troubling, to the ridicule and contempt expressed openly about the President across the officer corps and throughout a military already reeling from reductions, talk of a pay cut, and the general uncertainties of the end of the Cold War. The problem was both dramatized and aggravated by incidents like those described at the beginning of this article. By the spring of 1993, personal observations and contacts by scholars of civil-military relations, backed up by a wide selection of press reports, indicated that the civil-military relationship between a president and the uniformed military had become the most sour in American history—no commander-in-chief ever so disliked or so reviled, or spoken of with such contempt and dislike by the

[13]Weigley, "Civilian Control," pp. 29-30; Colin L. Powell, "US. Forces: Challenges Ahead," *Foreign Affairs*, Winter 1992/93, pp. 32-42. Powell made a similar foray into foreign policy as National Security Adviser in the interregnum between Bush's election and inauguration in a speech to the Economic Club of Detroit. See Roth, *Sacred Honor*, pp. 129-130.



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professional military, as Bill Clinton.

In fairness to General Powell, it could be argued that in each case he acted with pure motives to get the best policy outcome he could, in the best interest of the country at the time and in the circumstances. After all, if there is a policy vacuum and the Congress must conclude a budget for the armed forces, should not the Chairman step in? If the President, the Secretaries of State and Defense, and the National Security Adviser abrogated their responsibilities to make foreign and national security policy, should not the Chairman offer one? In an intervention like the Gulf, should not the Chairman mediate between the civilians and military, provide proper advice, prevent what he believes are misleading and dangerous plans from percolating up the chain of command, and otherwise act in a manner to secure proper, usable policy guidance from above and innovative, winning strategies from below? Should not the American people have the benefit of the views of senior military officers in policy debates so that the appropriate military action can be considered and the public debate informed? Should not the new administration be informed of military views on admitting homosexuals, the implications of such a step, and an acceptable outcome produced even if the process gets a bit messy and embarrassing?

If civilian control has eroded, are not civilians at least partly responsible? After all, it was Bill Clinton (or his staff) who put the homosexual issue on the table within 48 hours of the election victory. Our system of government frequently puts civilians into positions of great responsibility without proper preparation or experience. They stay a few years and move on. Twenty years ago, one scholar and veteran of the civil-military battles of McNamara's Pentagon wrote that "military men are anxious to receive policy guidance from their civilian 'masters,' at the same time they seek to protect their professional autonomy...." "The problem is not the overweening military," he concluded, "but the inadequate civilians, who, lacking the means, cannot even test their determination to exercise effective control. The danger... is not that the military may take over the country, but that the country is not able to preside over the military."[14]

But stepping back from the totality of General Powell's actions leads one to conclude that he cannot escape responsibility. He allowed to be published, at a critical time in our presidential election cycle, two articles on foreign policy in leading publications that would have have been bold statements by any officer, at *any* time. His disclaimers have been weak. Given his actions and inaction in the struggle over homosexuals, it was misleading to tell a homosexual alumnus at Harvard's commencement, "I have no brief against any group of Americans, but I represent an institution that changes very slowly and with great reluctance. I'm doing my best to make it change as fast as I think it effectively can."[15]

The General has also been disingenuous about his own role. In his last press breakfast as Chairman, he described himself only as "an adviser" who did not "command anything except the joint staff," whose "legal power is quite limited," the "principal military adviser to the president, period," an official who "never" gives "any orders except in the name of the secretary or the president." But, in his first public speech after retirement, to businessmen in Minneapolis, Powell gave a quite different account of his power. He compared "his role as chairman of the Joint Chiefs to being CEO of a vast corporation," "the equivalent of running the biggest business in the world" with "a $270-billion-a-year budget, 4 million employees, a book value of $1 trillion and 535 'outside direc-

[14]Adam Yarmolinsky, "Civilian Control: New Perspectives for New Problems," *Indiana Law Journal*, Vol. 49 (1974), pp. 654, 655.

[15]Stephen Hanan, "Commencement Postscript: Making a Stand," *Harvard Magazine*, September/October 1993, p. 10.



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tors' in Congress as its bosses."[16]

Colin Powell emerged by the end of his tenure larger than life, and clearly more powerful than ever could be deemed proper under the American system of civilian control of the military. He escaped criticism in part because of his outstanding record, in part because of his ability and his achievements. But the very politicization of the military that has contributed to the problem acted to protect the General from criticism. The natural critics of a general overstepping his role would have been the liberal Democrats, but they saw no profit and much danger in criticizing the first African-American Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, whose position on the most emotional military issue of the age—intervention in foreign wars with American troops—more or less matches their own. It is ironic that General Powell's position on intervention, on the process and method as well as the substance, lay rooted in the same nightmare memories of Vietnam as the liberal and centrist Democrats.

## *Restoring Civilian Control*

THE STUNNING withdrawal of Admiral Bobby Ray Inman from nomination as Secretary of Defense rescued the Clinton administration from one of its most dangerous mistakes. The quirky, independent Inman would have been impossible to control; having replaced Les Aspin in less than a year, the President could not have easily have fired Inman, and the Admiral knew it. But the greater danger to the country was that Inman, because he is a military officer, could not have succeeded in solving Bill Clinton's most pressing military problem: bridging the enormous chasm between the President and the professional military.

Few commentators on Aspin's firing and Inman's selection have realized that one of Bill Clinton's chief requirements for Secretary of Defense has been someone who could sell the President to the officer corps and create for President Clinton the one public persona that has so far eluded him: commander-in-chief. His mistake was in thinking that a military man could do the job. Bill Clinton must take control of the military, while at the same time marginalizing military affairs in favor of his (and the American people's) domestic agenda. The choice of Inman would have weakened civilian control by militarizing the key link in the chain of civilian control: the cabinet officer responsible for national defense. Bill Clinton very nearly dealt civilian control of the military one of the most damaging blows of the twentieth century.

When Americans speak or write about civilian control, lurking in the background lays a concern about a coup d'etat, the man on horseback, that goes back to the formation of our political system in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century English and American politics. Military revolt was a real fear of the generation that established the United States and wrote the state and federal constitutions in the 1770s and 1780s. In every major defense reorganization in American history since that time, this concern for military subordination to civilian authority has been voiced, and inevitably written in some way into the legislation.

And yet a coup has never really been a serous threat, and the chances today, even of an attempt, are virtually nil. Civilian control is too deeply rooted in our tradition and in a political system based on the rule and the legitimacy of law. Americans are too imbued with constitutionalism: reverence for a sup-

[16]Quotations are from Reuter Transcript Report, Defense Writers' Group Breakfast Meeting, Westin Hotel, Washington, DC, Sept. 23, 1993; Susan Feyder, "Chief of charm: Colin Powell gets warm reception from Convention Center crowd," Minneapolis *Star Tribune*, Nov. 12, 1993, p. 1; and Dave Beal, "Powell: Perot's wrong about business savvy," *Duluth* (MN) *News-Tribune*, Nov. 12, 1993, p. 6.



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ple, adaptable system of government described in four manuscript pages, that provides consciously and explicitly for military subordination to civilian authority. Except for a few instances notable for their infrequency, our military officers have, historically, recoiled instinctively from even thinking about open insubordination, overturning constituted authority, or abrogating the Constitution.

If a coup is not the issue, then what does civilian control really mean? *First*, and most fundamentally, it means that civic power in society—government—lays in the hands of civilians and civilian institutions. All three of the independent branches of American government are headed and controlled by civilians, at every level, and at all times—peace and war—with the single exception of martial law, exercised only temporarily in specific areas under specified conditions, and then instituted by civilian authority.

*Second*, civilian control means that the policies and procedures governing our military affairs—at home and abroad, during peace and war, from matters of great magnitude like grand strategy to matters of minor detail such the as penalty for an infraction of the rules by a private at some distant post—are determined by civilian authorities: in the first example by the president in his role as commander-in-chief, in the second by Congress in the Uniform Code of Military Justice. Civilians decide the kind of weapons to build and forces to have, how many of them and how to get them, where to deploy them, and under what circumstances they will be used. It is civilians who decide the extent to which the professional military is to be consulted and heard and where to divide responsibility and authority between civilian and military, even in the business of military operations and tactics. These civilians may be more or less knowledgeable or experienced, more or less honest and forthright, more or less openminded, but they define the border between civil and military authority. To make a crude analogy to card playing, civilians possess not only all the face cards and all the trumps, but make up the rules of the game. At least, that is the theory.

The *true* character of the relationship is far different. What is rarely grasped, even by those who are involved, is that both structurally and operationally, the system does not work smoothly much of the time. The military does obey orders and civilians do make the major decisions, but beneath the surface the process consists of continual conflict and struggle for influence, which on occasion blows up and flares into major confrontation, or the appearance of confrontation. Sometimes, even while there appears to be harmony, there is ongoing negotiation, compromise, conflict, and maneuvering, the reality of which makes "civilian control" a far more complicated and less certain business.[17]

Civilian control is not a *fact*, but a *process*, that varies over time and is very much "situational," that is, dependent on the issues and the personalities, civilian and military, involved at any given point. What has mattered in the United States, especially since the onset of the Cold War and a large standing establishment, has not been whether civilians are in control; given the nature of our government, its divided structure and partisan battles, no one person or institution completely "controls" anything, and certainly not policy outcomes on major issues. The *real problem* of civilian control is the relative weight or influence of the military in the decisions the government makes, not only in military policy and war, but in foreign, defense, economic, and social policy (for much military policy can have vast implications for various aspects of national life). Just

[17]Weigley, p. 27, states "At least since General of the Army Douglas MacArthur's rebellion against President Harry S Truman's conduct of the Korean War in 1951, however, conflict and bickering between soldiers and civilians have become perennial impediments to the formation of a coherent American foreign and military policy."



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where the line defining civilian control and proper civil-military relationships lies has never been, and cannot be, determined with clarity and finality; that demarcation, too, is situational.

Sometimes the line is clear, as when an Air Force major general openly disparages the President at a military gathering, or an officer patently violates national policy, as General Douglas MacArthur did in 1951. But other instances are not so obvious. For example, who should determine which bases should close, or who should select or approve targets to be bombed in a limited war, or decide whether homosexuals should serve openly in the military, or what policy advice is proper to make public and under what circumstances? While we cannot always draw such clear distinctions between civilian and military roles, most of us can sense when something is wrong, when the military or an officer goes over the line—as Admiral Inman did when he said, at his nomination, in front of the President, that he "did not seek the job...did not want the job... did not vote for President Clinton" and "had to reach a level of comfort that we could work together...in your role as the commander in chief while I was Secretary of Defense...." Like pornography, we can't always define it, but each generation surely knows it when it sees or hears it. We have been witness this last year and a half, actually this last five years, to the erosion of civilian control of the military, and we ought to recognize it.

Is the Republic in any *immediate* danger? Probably not. If the civil-military relationship varies over time and the relative weight and influence of military and civilian are situational and personal, then the system is our savior. It is then self-governing, regulated by law, tradition, and politics. Colin Powell leaves the scene, and the game changes substantially; Bill Clinton puts the homosexual issue largely, if not completely, behind him and gains firmer footing as his administration finds focus and accomplishes its goals. Bill Perry will put a civilian defense team into place and it will begin to take back the proper and legal authority that has temporarily (one hopes) migrated to the military staffs in each of the armed services, in the year it has taken the Clintonites to get their administration together.

But active steps will still be needed to reverse the corrosion of proper practice that has occurred. The new Secretary of Defense and his team in the Pentagon will have to undertake a concerted campaign to restore civilian control, a series of initiatives quite beyond asserting themselves on matters of policy or instituting new procedures for management and administration. Not only will they need to reform the weapons acquisition process, but they will have to reassess the service's roles and missions and make excruciating choices between the readiness of today's forces and their modernization with expensive new weapons systems.

Most importantly, they will have to rebuild the diversity of the officer corps, particularly with respect to prevailing attitudes and perspectives. Proper civil-military relations will have to be taught to the officer corps at every level, with a new sensitivity and a sophistication of understanding so that present trends can be reversed. Over time, that modicum of trust and confidence between civilian and military that characterized an earlier age must be rekindled. It is not wholly within the power of President Clinton and this generation of senior leadership to repair the damage and heal the wounds, but they must begin. The alternative is simply unacceptable. As one knowledgeable senior officer who worked for General Powell wrote to me privately, "a Powell and a Shalli and one or two or three others may not harm the Republic, but we could be playing with fire." □



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# Asia's Fate

## *A Response to the Singapore School*

Eric Jones

THE ECONOMIC SUCCESS of East and Southeast Asia challenges the verities of Western historical uniqueness. It shatters the ethnocentric notion, which even Asian writers accepted as late as the 1960s, that industrialization is a reward for Protestantism. The East Asian Miracle is taking place within quite another ethic, and some of the practices within the region would have made a Victorian mill-owner blush. The signal questions about the phenomenon are: will it go on; what type of polity and society will eventually settle down alongside the Western world; and what will be the implications for the Third World of this other ethnocentrism: growth-through-Confucianism.

### *The Singapore School*

SOME EAST and Southeast Asian officials are busily dismissing aspects of Western culture, notably democracy and human rights. A "Singapore School" is arguing vigorously in Western newspapers and journals against what it sees as human rights campaigns mounted by a West which it thinks is spiritually, and to all intents and purposes financially, bankrupt. The "School" includes Lee Kuan Yew, elder statesman of Singapore, Bilahari Kausikan of the Singaporean Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Kishore Mahbubani, a Singaporean diplomat. Their arguments are meant to apply to the whole of "Confucian" Asia and probably beyond, not merely to the prodigiously successful city-state of Singapore. Their attitude must concern anyone raised in the Western tradition, whatever our own backslidings, for they are insistent that we keep our noses out of what they see as solely their affairs. They rely on persuading us that the greatest good of the greatest number in Asia absolutely requires the use of repressive political methods.

Lee Kuan Yew expresses these ideas trenchantly and with a greater sense of the historical processes than most other leaders show. His pragmatism is seductive. We have however to be careful: the power of the arguments and the learning behind them invites, and properly invites, a closer scrutiny than the pontifications of more ordinary politicians would deserve. In debating terms, Mr. Lee and the Singapore School are the ones with whom we have to contend, but other leading figures throughout the region are the ones likely to practice on the grand scale what the Singaporeans preach. Lee Kuan Yew may influence them and rationalize their actions, but he cannot control those who may take his arguments as an invitation to an open-ended license which a close reading shows he does not intend.

Mr. Lee has given his observations on how the world is unfolding, together with opinions on the desirability of different

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approaches to growth and development, to interviewers for several Western newspapers and magazines. His ideas are complex—the subject is complex—and not easily summarized, partly because the interviewing mode tends to mingle historical observations and value judgements. The core of the position seems to be that values are learned differently in West and East, with one's mother's milk; that Asian leaders are right to put the reduction of material suffering first, even if they have to be brutal in order to attain that goal; and that, although Asian societies as they develop will inevitably induce more participatory politics, this will be extremely slow and its hastening should not be encouraged by outsiders, for fear of blurring goals and creating disorder.

Mr. Lee comes out strongly against brutality for its own sake but displays special sympathy for Deng Xiao Ping, on the grounds of the Chinese leader's personal suffering and the enormous difficulty of managing a population as large as China's, especially when parts of the economy are growing fast. It is possible to conclude that, although both he and Kishore Mahbubani deprecate the *extent* of the force used at Tiananmen Square, Mr. Lee comes uncomfortably close to an endorsement of current Chinese policing methods.

Interviewed by the *New Perspectives Quarterly* (Winter 1992), Mr. Lee said that in China "there can't possibly be a policeman for every city block, so one must depend on the mass impact of [the televised executions of criminals] to bring about a semblance of order." But, on the contrary, the big population and low wages of China are precisely what might permit there to be a policeman on every block, if that is necessary. For all the genuine difficulties, it is not obvious that fear-inducing public demonstrations of ruthlessness are the only way such a country can or should be governed.

As to the West, Mr. Lee is well informed. After all, he knows English society from the inside. He is not sympathetic to Western governments who have failed to stem the worst social abuses and extreme indulgences. Why should he be? Nevertheless, the relevant issue is whether Western democracy is capable of a sufficient revulsion against its own excesses to expunge them. Mr. Lee seems to think this will happen, but only perforce. "I truly believe the process is Darwinian," he says. "If adopting Western values diminishes the prospects for the survival of a society, they will be rejected."

The suggestion that the indulgence of special interests will fatally weaken the whole of society is rarely entertained by the chattering classes in the West, but again the real issue is whether Western-style democracy or Asian-style authoritarianism is likely to prove the better antidote in the long term. As far as Asia goes, its problems and vulnerability on the road to riches mean, in Mr. Lee's view, that Western liberal ideas are inappropriate. Individual rights will simply get in the way of social progress. Do not indulge them.

While Lee Kuan Yew's opinions have the highest profile, all the Singaporean critics are tough and their views make uncomfortable reading for any Westerner. The most detailed version is to be found in Mahbubani's article, "The West and the Rest," in *The National Interest* (Summer 1992). Similar, though less subtle, assertions of East Asian exceptionalism can be found in the utterances of politicians throughout the Asian-Pacific region, from Malaysia and Indonesia to mainland China. We need to decide whether the claims that heavy-handed policies are indispensable in East Asia are *Realpolitik* or special pleading.

The authoritarianism of this region is not uniform, but then neither is Western democracy. Both philosophies may be seen as ideal types. The question is which of the two most often approaches its highest expression, the benign rule of a philosopher-king in one case, participatory democracy in the other. We may start with history, in which authoritarian regimes have repeatedly destroyed



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themselves, whereas much of the sound and fury in the democracies may surely be regarded as inherent in self-correction. Contrary to the Singapore School, we may be forgiven for thinking that democracy has historically shown more staying-power.

If, however, the efforts of that School succeed at insulating Asia from effective criticisms of its human rights' behavior, a new species of society could arise in the Far East. The social form would be mass prosperity under authoritarian control. If they can guarantee growth, those in charge would be able to go on herding society this way or that by means of instruments of government ranging from muzzling the press to arbitrary arrest, forced labor, and public executions, as in China today.

Prosperity of itself supposedly justifies actions like these. It is a sufficient condition. It transforms arbitrariness into the "good government" which, we are assured, is the choice of a populace made comfortable with authoritarian rule by its history, but which we are also told remains too uneducated to choose wisely for itself. Presumably only if growth fails will the Mandate of Heaven be removed from the wise rulers, the philosopher-kings.

There have been notorious totalitarian aberrations in the West but they were probably inherently unstable, and the rest of the West resisted and even struggled at great cost to eliminate them. Is the West (a better social than political catchall, of course) now to stand by while East Asia uses abhorrent methods to help it overtake in the fast lane of world trade? Are East Asian opinion-makers correct in arguing that the expectations and problems of their massive region, coupled with what they see as the self-interest and hypocrisy of the West, exempt them from moving towards representative government, independent law and individual freedoms? Are their acts of suppression truly "internal matters"? Are there really no universals?

To consider these matters, we will first examine the authoritarian case and then sketch three conceivable outcomes of the Far East's great experiment. Two of these futures will be unappealing to liberal Western eyes. The remaining possibility implies not merely that Asians are far from being as different from Westerners as their leaders declare, but that growth-with-authoritarianism may prove to be self-limiting.

If this more cheerful prospect obtains, the first East Asian generation to experience rapid economic growth, and its authoritarian leaders, will have been but actors in a passing play. What happened to them will have been transient and historically contingent, not the working out of some indefeasible sinitic trait. Leaders who currently employ severe methods to reach the goal of growth may then still wish to claim that the end justifies the means, but success will have changed the context of political life. It will have had unintended consequences: on this showing, a generation or two down the track East Asia will have an evolved political clientele living amidst relative plenty. In this event, the most that will remain to be discussed will be whether one or two postwar generations should have had to suffer the chastisements of leaders chasing after growth. Such a debate will exude all the lack of urgency that surrounds, say, the dispute over whether the British standard of living fell during the early industrial revolution. East Asia will have the leisure for speculation like that.

Unfortunately the other two possibilities are more dire. Before we turn to them we should however dissect the authoritarian case in its own terms. For the moment it represents reality, and the assumptions and propositions involved throw light on its likely stability as well as its merits or demerits.

## *No Sunset Clause*

THE MOST prominent advocate of authoritarianism, then, is Lee Kuan Yew. He depicts human existence explicitly as a Darwinian struggle in which the West is close to eliminating itself through its private



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indulgences, proliferating special interests and slack leadership. The Singapore School is willing to debate the issue in these terms, which is novel for cautious people previously disinclined to traffic in abstractions. More significantly, Beijing has been consulting closely with Singapore (population 3 millions) in a search for the secret of retaining political control while permitting 1.2 billion people to get rich, or at any rate much less poor.

Should the authoritarian experiment come off, and especially if the West stands by without attending to its own social sores, moral as well as economic primacy may pass into East Asian hands. The proof of the pudding will be that "good" government, by which Mr. Lee's circle means its own hard-headed and unchallengeable control, will have delivered the material goods and will demand the moral reward: continued righteous authority. East Asia, then, will not simply dominate the world economy within a generation but become the model of choice for less-developed countries, in social mores as well as policies. The Less Developed Countries (LDCs) will look East, not West, in ways unwarranted since the early Ming dynasty.

Order is the touchstone of the Singaporeans' argument. Without order, they say, there can be no certainty or even probability of economic advance. If order breaks down, at least in China, there will be what China's rulers have always feared, turmoil, and maybe a resumption of the suffering, starvation, and warlordism that in any case lie only a couple of generations back. Rather than that, let the people feel the smack of "good" government and live under the sway of philosopher-kings.

These are not irrelevant matters. Shorn of the Singapore School's contempt for the West; shorn of specious appeals to an unchangeable sinitic personality and "4,000 years of Chinese history"; and even absent the self-interest of officials close enough to power to bathe in its glow, East Asia does indeed walk a tightrope over an abyss. With fourteen million additional unemployed peasants fetching up in China's interior cities every year, the authorities do have a duty as well as an interest in maintaining public order. The threat of turmoil among the masses, rather than student protest, was probably Deng's fear when he reacted in Tiananmen Square.

Less clear is it that detention without trial, a muzzled press and other unfreedoms arise from a similar threat in tiny Singapore. What is more, it has not been shown that economic growth would decelerate in places like Singapore given greater democracy and more popular rights. A distaste for what some individuals might do with their lives, given the choice, is being permitted to obscure the benefits of freedoms. Those benefits include wider, potentially self-correcting, public discussion of the methods and aims of policy.

The authoritarian argument is by no means fully persuasive. Were the case to be granted, safeguards to ensure a genuine intention of ultimately relaxing the grip would still be needed—since, whatever the justifications for control at present, it is disingenuous to imply that Asians positively *like* regimes where political activity must take place beneath a Damocles Sword. It is dangerous to believe that Asians can be expected to remain quiet for ever under leaders who retain office by such means, at any rate without steadily increasing surveillance and policing. "Preference falsification" of the type that marked Soviet rule may make it seem so, but authoritarian rulers are likely to be told what they wish to hear.

Where, then, is the sunset clause? Lee Kuan Yew gives varying answers, suggesting that it may be one hundred years before Asians can be trusted with individual Western-style freedoms though claiming elsewhere that, whereas China, India and Indonesia's people will need ninety years to learn how to handle modernity in a balanced way, South Korea, Taiwan and Singapore



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may need only thirty years. He thus foreshadows the emergence of "universal" values after a century even in China. This seems to admit that individual rights will finally come, though with luck not yet, rather like St. Augustine's chastity, and that when they do they will not cause society to decay as it has in the West. There is no acknowledgement that the already-educated may be trusted to compete responsibly for the votes of the less educated.

The standing and motives of Western countries with respect to the promotion of democracy and human rights are not, for present purposes, much to the point. The supposed motives are dismissed by the Singapore School as commercial (attempts to raise labor costs in competing countries), culturally imperialistic, and hypocritical (given the social problems in the West itself and its willingness to indulge similar authoritarian behavior on behalf of the Saudi Arabias of the world). The Prime Minister of Malaysia, Dr. Mahathir, calls for a Europe Watch, an America Watch and an Australia Watch, if there is to be an Asia Watch.

The tabescence of society in the West is indeed much as these people portray it. The record of unemployment, homelessness, beggary, and crime does not need to be rehearsed. Not the cost but a lack of will gets in the way of solutions; Western countries were poorer in the late 1940s and 1950s, but they were then more cohesive, safer, and more salubrious. The West's present faults do shame us. They erode, though they do not quite nullify, our right to carp at others. Even to many Western eyes the spectacle of a German leader bargaining for human rights in Beijing must seem ludicrous. The line-up for an Oxford lecture series on human rights, which includes one historian known for describing the executions of the French Terror as "glorious," must give rise to suspicions that this is another of those issues which underemployed Western Marxists would like to capture. At the other political extreme is the surely cynical "cautioning" of Washington by the Australian Prime Minister not to take a hard-line stance on Indonesian human rights issues.

## *Defects of Authoritarianism*

BUT TWO WRONGS do not make a right, and the injustices in West and East remain incommensurable. Authoritarianism fails to address its own greater defects. Its proponents ask us to forget the processes of government and measure only by outcomes, defined as superior materialism and social order. The West is enjoined to keep its mouth shut and put its own shabby house in order. Admonitions and trade sanctions directed anywhere else are "interferences."

An inconsistency soon appears in what the Singapore School, at least, would wish the West to do. Withdrawing the American navy from the eastern seas would not suit it at all. The United States, then, must pay to hold the ring, for it has interests in open sealanes and Asian peace, but it must abstain from criticizing those for whom it thus bears the external shield. Presumably Asia may then get on with becoming still more competitive, without footing the bill for maritime policing.

The more central problems which the stated case for authoritarianism fails to address, beyond the lack of a clear statement of how and when its dissolution may be anticipated, are as follows. First, no guarantee is offered, nor of course can be offered, that the growth which it claims to engender will go on being delivered. Continued growth would require the leadership to be able always to resist pleas for bail-outs from special interests, ignore false signals, and place only winning bets on the industries it would like to promote or see wound down. The economic prospects which appear so good are actually ambiguous. Serious miscalculations have been made, notably the Japanese persistence with mainframes when the United States shifted to personal com-



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puters. With industry policy, any mistake will be industry-wide. East Asia has been lucky, but if mistakes are made the non-market disciplines on its policy-makers may be too weak to offset them.

Authoritarian government has delivered economic growth in much of post-war island and peninsular Asia, but almost never did so throughout the economic history of the Confucian world. "Old-style Confucianism of the wrong sort" is the Singapore School's response, but we may suspect that the circumstances of the post-war world have more to do with modern success than does a style of government which, as of old, involves the suppression of freedoms and an absence of impartial law.

Mr. Lee believes that *guanxi* (connections) substitute for law. *Guanxi* always have been a substitute for law in China, but incompletely. I believe that the lack of contract law was one cause of China's long history of expansion without real growth, and may yet restrict the market. The current enthusiasm for investing in China, though new in scale and sustained because the Overseas Chinese entered when the West and (less so) Japan were scared off by Tiananmen, is not entirely unprecedented. The Overseas Chinese could develop *guanxi* and make money by exploiting imperfections in Chinese markets. For Westerners, this virtual feeding frenzy should not obscure the remaining distortions and risks of investing in a country where personal and political contacts replace black-letter law.

A more abstract problem connected with the authoritarian style pertains to creativity. The emphasis on order, it is reasonable to think, is mistaken: originality and novelty have typically flourished in individualistic, even disorderly, societies. At the moment the instrumentalist approach which diverts so much Asian talent into engineering, computer science and the like is paying off. Overseas Chinese families need no encouragement to oblige their children to enter these fields; they know life is hard and livings have to be made. Harsh experience makes them risk-averse. Authoritarianism, with its pragmatic orientation, reinforces this trait, which however is a rigidifying one.

Technologically there is plenty of catching up to be done. There is such a backlog of unadopted technology that it is possible for the Chinese, in particular, to ride free on Western inventions, adding little more than the polish which can come, as it came in post-war Japan, from reverse engineering. But this will not do in the end. East Asia will not come to contribute its equilibrium share to world science and technology (the share proportionate to the size of its population) if it remains so defensive. It will not get back to the days when China was the world's creative leader, under that remarkable dynasty, the Song.

## *Wesley, Schumpeter, and Quebec*

THE EMPHASIS in the last few paragraphs has been on historically conditioned *current* attitudes and behavior. Our expectations depend on whether we think that historical conditioning is hard to change, or whether fresh incentives can alter the behavior of rising age groups. The task for authoritarian governments may turn out to be managing prosperity's unintended enfeebling of motivation. Thinkers in the Western world long ago became anxious about such effects. John Wesley and Joseph Schumpeter worried, respectively, that nonconformity and capitalism would undermine their moral foundations through success. Why work as hard as your father if you are already well-off?

This is a test which has scarcely begun to confront the Confucian world. The Japanese are close to the brink, but their engrained attitudes are being challenged in a recession which blurs the rise in consumerism and masks any softening of the work ethic. If we believe, as historians often do, in a kind of cultural fixity, we will discount the new tendencies and rely on inherent "Japaneseness"



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to predict what the Japanese may do. If, like economists, we expect people to respond to changing incentives we will anticipate that novel tides may wash over East Asia.

When such things start to happen, they can happen fast—with what are known as "Quebec Effects," after the rapid, unheralded decline of Roman Catholic observances in 1960s Quebec. We should note, too, a sizeable difference between modern East Asia and the West of Wesley's day or even Schumpeter's: East Asian incomes are rising across whole societies faster than anywhere or anywhen in history. The experiment as a totality is unprecedented. The consequences too may be bigger and quicker than ever before.

The Singapore School takes the culturist line. It thinks Asians and Westerners will go on being fundamentally different. It is disinclined to accept that the so-called "Western" values of individualism are really universally wanted. In response we may urge that Western societies have been able to express individualist and democratic values largely because, in comparative world terms, their history has been rather benign. The history of their political and legal ideas has also been distinctive, certainly, but this is too much dwelt on in standard accounts. The special enabling feature was the experience of relative ease and prosperity, notably during the nineteenth century, which permitted democracy to evolve. The Singapore School has not faced up to the way in which the more successful parts of East Asia are already changing in similar directions, nor how much faster that evolution is likely to prove in the twin circumstances of faster growth than the West ever managed and the far greater integration of the modern world. Some groups are already tentatively exhibiting preferences for supposedly "Western" curiosities like multi-party elections, more leisure, and a cleaner environment. The prior existence of Western role models will speed up the process.

Just as authoritarian systems fail to specify how they will get down from the tiger's back, they also fail, almost by definition, to answer the age-old question about forms of government, *quis custodiet ipsos custodes?*—or as Marc Bloch put it with respect to Europe's achievement, who will bind the ruler? This issue, then, is accountability, that is to say not only when but how rulers are to be made accountable. With respect to how and when the authoritarian task will be completed, Lee Kuan Yew admits that East Asian societies may become individualistic, here after thirty years, there after ninety years, but he does not say *what will be the means.* As to binding the ruler, the Singapore School is obliged to be silent, since authoritarianism would cease to be authoritarian if it submitted to restraint.

Related to these dilemmas is a third set. Who is to choose the leaders? How may a society ensure that one philosopher-king will be succeeded by another? Few societies are as fortunate as Singapore in having had as ruler a genuine philosopher like Mr. Lee and making the transition from his direct control so smoothly. But Singapore, for all its drama, is very small; generalizing its methods or replicating its luck on the scale of China cannot be easy, as Mr. Lee is the first to say. That, however, is the challenge.

Peace and order are certainly universal desiderata. Ironically, we may suspect that East Asians, whom we are told admire "good government," may be placing a short-run bet in choosing the authoritarian route, since every so often—more often than in the democracies—transition to a new leadership is likely to be nastily contested. Orderly succession is nowhere as satisfactorily guaranteed as in Western parliamentary democracies. Historically the competing nation-states of Europe out-performed any ancient or oriental empire, despite the economies of scale which favored empires. Democratic states also have a good chance of out-lasting authoritarian ones. Authoritarianism, like empires, may prove to be better on paper than in practice. Of course, if society is no



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more than the vector of a Darwinian struggle, no matter, and all these concerns are otiose. The fittest will announce himself, which however does not promise that he will turn out to be as much of a philosopher as he intends to be a king. We have yet to see whether the crown will be calmly and lastingly handed on after Deng dies in China or Suharto vacates his position in Indonesia.

## *The Limitations of Scenarios*

TO CAST A cold eye on the quality of East Asian societies a generation from now we require more than a casual means of canvassing the future. Yet, as the world slides off the euphoric cusp following the Cold War, seeing ahead becomes chancier than ever. Business analysts are still riding the chariot of globalization whereas foreign policy analysts are starting to cry "whoa." Both offer forecasts and scenarios. Before coming to the different visions which the parties espy, how do these approaches differ?

Scenarios are forecasts made by people who do not trust their judgement. Why ever not? The reason seems to be that whereas it is possible to believe one has identified inner logics propelling society down particular tracks (the logic of the Product Cycle will be handy for thinking about East Asia), no-one has found a way of telling when the train may jump the rails. Notice that whereas foreign policy analysts leave room for shocks (like wars), business analysts often tend to imply that the mood of the moment will last indefinitely.

The timing of the system-breaks is what defeats us all. Thus an econometrician named Looney projected the national income of Iran through the 1970s and into the early 1980s but failed to predict the fall of the Shah in the midst of his series. Otherwise, no doubt, his model and data were to be relied on. The difficulty, then, is to convert scenarios into forecasts proofed against such shocks, given that international politics may snarl up the red carpet being unrolled by the business commentators.

The upshot is that we can suggest scenarios but only guess at forecasts, which is what will be done here. The entire East Asian region is various enough to be experiencing disparate rates of growth and to have divergent interests, incompatible regimes, differences in culture, which make generalizing somewhat artificial. There are however some central tendencies with which we may make a start. Thus three startlingly different outcomes for East Asia as a whole over the next generation may be, *first*, a strategically-pessimistic outcome in which after some growth there is a breakdown into conflict, even war; *second*, an economically optimistic outcome in which growth occurs, the economies become still more competitive than they are already, but political cultures do not much change; and *third*, a politically optimistic outcome in which growth continues, slowing down as each economy approaches current average OECD levels, meanwhile softening those elements in Asian political life for which Western distaste is evident in the so-called human rights crusade.

This last scenario should not be thought of as "Westernization." Rather it would be the release, in conditions of prosperity, of a latent universal demand for democracy and individual freedoms. Surprisingly, given the stereotypes and lacunae in the text-books, Asian history does reveal traces of local democracy and at least one major movement, the self-governing movement in early twentieth-century China. Circumstances regularly suppressed these "sprouts of democracy" and they never managed to capture the high polities, yet they did occur. East Asians may turn out to be different from other peoples chiefly in their different opportunities.

We are alluding to universal hearts' desires. In my opinion, Lee Kuan Yew's emphasis on a special and changeless China underrates the attractiveness of the values which the Chinese, like other peoples, have made occasional efforts to unearth from



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beneath the burden of contrary tradition. The Chinese may be expected to espouse these common values when circumstances favor them, at least as the age-groups most traumatized by earlier horrors fade away. The twenty-year olds in southern China are already consumerist; they did not share the hurt and do not retain the apprehensions of that other cohort, not much older, which had to walk across the hot coals of the Cultural Revolution.

## *Which One?*

TO RETURN TO the first two scenarios, they are clearly unwelcome: no one wants conflict, especially when nuclear weapons make containing war more hazardous than ever; nor can the West relish even the second possibility, a competitive Asia strong enough to go on rationalizing its denial of individual rights and democratic politics.

The first scenario is now being touted by strategists. The Chichele Professor of the History of War at Oxford, Robert O'Neill, recently warned of renewed Asian conflict. He was especially chary of the Japanese, edgy as they always have been about access to markets and sources of oil and raw materials. More recently still, Professor Paul Dibb, a Canberra strategist, has raised the specter of regional war a couple of decades from now, which is close in terms of military preparation. He foresees conflict between expansionary economies.

Certainly there are signs of tension over disputed territories and maritime oil fields, while several East and Southeast Asian countries, together with India, are actively rearming at a brisk rate and buying weapons capable of projecting power beyond their borders. The balance of opinion seems to be that Beijing will succeed in holding the provinces together while presiding over double-digit growth, but a dissolution of China cannot be discounted until provincial incomes are much more even. Revolutions of rising expectations are the most potent of all revolutions; it has yet to be seen that authoritarian regimes will be able to avoid them while ensuring and permitting the continuation of growth.

The second scenario is what Asian leaders would wish for themselves. There is no major political upset. Growth continues. Markets throughout the developed world stay open to exporters in the region. This applies in particular to the United States, which for the sake of the argument must be supposed to be too embroiled in the China trade to withdraw that country's Most Favored Nation (MFN) status without insupportable job losses at home. This appears to be what China banked on at the Seattle APEC meeting in November, 1993, when refusing to discuss human rights.

While it may seem unlikely that Western markets can remain open indefinitely unless Western economies recover some of their old energy, let us assume, in accordance with this scheme of things, that they do raise their growth rates and provide export markets for others. Any "excess" production in East Asia is traded within the region, as part of the increasing consumption inherent in growth and in line with the existing trend towards more intra-Asian trade.

This is a business-as-usual scenario. No abnormal and certainly no catastrophic international realignments are implied. Japan may slow down but not to a fatal extent; her cost-cutting propensities and backlog of miniaturized technologies help her do more than tread water. China meanwhile advances apace, her energies devoted to developing her backward interior. Nothing of great note shifts with respect to her governance, nor that of other countries in the region. A generation hence people in East Asia, though substantially richer, still do not have what Westerners regard as freedom.

Thus everywhere in East Asia the authorities continue to steer their economies adequately while retaining the ability to use undemocratic means of achieving their ends.



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Western ways have been extruded by the immune system of Confucianism, or at any rate post-Confucianism. This has become the richest single part of the world.

To leaders elsewhere in the non-Western world it looks more promising, its subjugation of the individual to the (purported) collective will more practical, than any model supplied by the tired, lax, former colonialists of the West. Notice that the gap need be only a relative one: the last little string of adjectives does not have to be taken too literally and the strictures of the Singapore School may even have lost a little of their absolute force. The West has continued to achieve slow growth. Nevertheless on the world stage we see that authoritarian methods have triumphed.

The third scenario is kinder. This time growth subverts the authoritarian order. Much opinion in the West has always expected this, for two reasons. The first is that our experience inclines us to associate democracy with high average incomes. The second is that we can actually imagine how higher incomes give people a stake in the system and reduce both the chances of domestic conflict and the need for close policing. However the former point is unhistorical. Democracy began to emerge when Western societies were immensely poorer than now, in early Switzerland for example. And the latter point cuts both ways, indeed the Singapore School rather depends on it—that the delivery of material well-being will be what continues to enure East Asians to their authoritarian regimes.

Neither of these reasons for embracing the final scenario is a good one. A better way of organizing our thoughts is to think in terms of the Product Cycle. According to that, as economies develop they move through stages defined by successively more advanced core industries. Thus, from a beginning with textiles, the sequence runs through automobile manufacturing, through consumer electronics, to the high-tech phase of computers and aerospace. Each set of core industries is distinguished from the previous stage by adding more value.

For our purposes what is pertinent is that each stage is also marked by the demand of its core industries for more skilled, better-trained, better-educated workers, a demand that spills over into adjacent sectors of the economy. Moreover, the rungs on this ladder of skill are rewarded with higher pay. Were this not so, the earliest economies to develop in East Asia, above all Japan, would not already have been experiencing such a pressure of wage costs that they have moved relatively low-skilled assembly tasks offshore.

The political implications are what concern us. The creation of a middle class transforms society. Some elements of that class, maybe only a fringe at first, start to demand those effete and non-material things which are associated (though mainly for reasons of history) with Western lifestyles and philosophies. The items include political participation, multi-party politics, an end to corruption, a freer press, environmental clean-up. Already these things and others can be seen emerging on the East Asian scene.

The transition may be gradual. Recession may slow it down. Many people will be content to acquire more *things*. Current politicians will try to frustrate some of the proliferation of demands; it is not their world, though it may prove to be the world they engender through their economic management. Yet once it is under way the evolution of the political culture need not be at all slow: it may come with a rush, in a Quebec Effect. There are signs that "modern" social change can indeed come fast in East Asia, witness the responsiveness of the birth-rate, which has slumped in several areas following the rise in income, opportunity, and the education of women. These things will have an Asian face, with features like the astonishing new Zodiacal Year traditions that are affecting the birth-rate in Taiwan and among the Overseas Chinese. But they will represent a version of modernity which sits more comfortably with individual choice than with the



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dictates of authorities.

Of course the current generation of leaders will be scandalized. It may fear the destabilizing effects of social change and the implications for the work ethic and savings rate. I doubt that it can halt the Juggernaut now that this is rolling, not without damaging growth itself. And as a final point, once public taste is seen to be shifting, the demand will exist for a new style of middle-class politics. Unless one-party ideology becomes once again more suffocating than it currently seems, political entrepreneurs will arise to supply the demand and, no doubt, to pretend that they have invented the fresh, non-material commodities which they will put on offer.

WHAT SHOULD we conclude? Is it more pusillanimous not to choose one scenario, so that it becomes a forecast, than it is reckless ever to guess at the future? Let me split the difference by reducing my three scenarios to two. The future of East Asia over the next generation seems most likely to exhibit either the first or the third possibility.

The first scenario is awful to contemplate but must be faced: historical antagonisms, remilitarization, stresses of growth, demographic pressures, conflicts over resources, all these make the future fraught. It did not look so nervy even a couple of years ago, despite Tiananmen Square, but overt regional conflict simply cannot be ruled out.

The second scenario—authoritarianism unmodified by successful growth—seems the least probable. It would mean that people in the region will always be "different." Although those who are familiar with the cultures of the region as they observe them today tend to favor this possibility, the economist in me does not believe that raising regional income so far and so fast, in a world containing the model of Western behavior, can continue without modifying political cultures. Full participation in world trade requires openness, which means that new ideas must infiltrate the region, bans on satellite dishes and the like notwithstanding.

If the question were, will East and Southeast Asia become recognizably democratic within the next five or ten years, the answer would be "almost certainly not," or even a flat "no." Over the space of a generation I am more hopeful, since among the technocrats required to manage growth, and especially among their offspring, are surely going to be some with wider aspirations. In any case, personal preferences are irrelevant. If this second scenario comes to pass, authoritarianism will contract as an externality of the persistent growth.

If the third scenario prevails and East Asians prove only superficially different from other peoples, the systems which result may be a far cry in appearance from those in the West but their content may not be enormously dissimilar. Economic growth turns what it touches to gold, though maybe some rust as well, according to one's point of view. It has worked this way everywhere so far. John Wesley was probably right that successful Methodism would undermine its own value system, and even Joseph Schumpeter not wholly wrong that capitalism would begin to undercut itself. There is no reason to imagine that the Confucian world can remain exempt from similar auto-immune reactions, given a generation or so of real prosperity. It too may settle for something other than work and authoritarianism, for some culturally specific variant of the things that really matter. □



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# A Question of Linkage

## *Capitalism, Prosperity, Democracy...*

Irwin Stelzer

THE SIMULTANEOUS explosion of economic growth in still-authoritarian China and economic collapse in increasingly democratic Russia rekindles an old debate concerning the relationship between democracy, capitalism, free markets, and economic development. There can be little doubt that the economy and the polity interact with each other, but the nature of that interaction is elusive.

We begin with the conventional, conservative formulation. Crudely stated, it goes something like this. Market capitalism is the greatest engine for economic development the world has ever seen, what Peter Berger calls a "horn of plenty that heaped...immense material wealth and an entrepreneurial class, on the countries in which it originated." By creating a thrusting entrepreneurial class, impatient with government restrictions on its adventures, and a middle class clamoring for consumer goods, education and choice, capitalism creates counterpoises to government authority, eventually forcing the acceptance of democratic institutions. In short, by producing economic wealth and an entrepreneurial class, capitalism inevitably produces democracy. And since democracies don't start wars or have expansionist proclivities—forget, for the moment, Theodore Roosevelt and imperialist Britain—capitalist-democratic development contributes to security and to world peace.

There is much to be said for this view, especially that portion that relates prosperity to market capitalism. Certainly, it seems to be validated by our own recent experience. Entrepreneurial capitalism became more dominant in the America of Ronald Reagan than it had been before, and job growth and record-breaking prosperity followed. In Britain, Margaret Thatcher reversed almost four decades of socialism—only the pace, but not the direction, of increasing government involvement in economic affairs changed when pre-Thatcher Tories alternated with Labour as Her Majesty's ministers—and changed her country from the sick man of Europe into one positioned for long-term, non-inflationary growth. Meanwhile, the Soviet economy was shown to be like the Wizard of Oz—an imposing facade, but impotent and powerless at its core. Put these events together and you have an unassailable proof that capitalism produces a level of economic welfare that a planned economy simply cannot emulate.

Add to that the apparent relationship between capitalism, prosperity, and democracy, and you have reason for self-satisfaction with the American political-economic system, at least in the broad.

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After all, in recent years a more-or-less free market capitalism in Chile, South Korea and Taiwan has produced, first, prosperity and, then, democratization. In Russia it may be the other way around: democratization (glasnost) preceded economic restructuring (perestroika). No matter: it all comes out well in the end—capitalism, democracy and prosperity march hand-in-hand into a bright, and therefore secure, future. Knowledge (or faith) that this is so informs several aspects of domestic and foreign policy.

## *Swings and Roundabouts*

UNFORTUNATELY, ALL is not as simple as it first seems: the linkages between economic and political structures, and between economic structures and economic performance are not quite as clear as the foregoing recitation suggests. And because they are not, we may have to do more to secure ourselves from external threats than wait for some inevitable historical tide to produce prosperity, democracy and world peace.

Consider America's experience. Nicholas Eberstadt, in his *Foreign Aid and American Purpose*, points out that, in 1787, when America adopted its Constitution, "life expectancy in the United States was almost certainly significantly lower than in sub-Saharan Africa today."[1] And per capita income some one hundred years later was "substantially lower than the figures currently imputed to such places as Algeria, Jordan, and Mexico." Yet America, poorer than many totalitarian countries are now, opted for democracy and made a spectacularly good go of it. Many years later, Cuba, then enjoying a standard of living far above those of nearly all its Latin American neighbors, embraced Fidel Castro's totalitarian socialism. "...[M]aterial prosperity might be desirable for a variety of reasons," concludes Eberstadt, "but it is neither a prerequisite for free and democratic rule nor a guarantee against those forces that might undermine such rule from within." To which his colleague at the American Enterprise Institute, Joshua Muravchik, would say, Amen. "...[W]e should not expect we can create democracy by fostering development," writes Muravchik in *Exporting Democracy: Fulfilling America's Destiny*, "the relationship between economic and political development is too indeterminate."[2]

Certainly, the experiential evidence concerning this relationship is ambiguous—totalitarian China is in the midst of a boom, undemocratic Singapore prospers, while newly somewhat-democratic Russia is on the brink of economic collapse. So democracy is no guarantor of prosperity, nor its absence a guarantor of poverty. On the other hand, there are pathetically poor dictatorships, and immensely prosperous democracies. No linkage is evident.

What we do seem to know is that, at the extremes, decentralized economies work better than centrally planned ones. America is better off than Russia, Chile than Cuba, Taiwan than North Korea, and a market-oriented China than a tightly controlled one. But experience provides a less certain guide when we come to the mid-range of the spectrum, those economies in which governments intervene in economic matters to varying degrees. For many years Japan's combination of private enterprise and government direction, its "state-guided market system," as Chalmers Johnson calls it, was the envy of the world. But now we see that the rigidities—and corruption—created by the bureaucratization of the Japanese economy are taking their toll. Germany, too, was thought to be a model of state-private sector cooperation, especially in the labor field, where its apprenticeship program and labor policies attracted praise from

[1]Washington, DC: AEI Press, 1988.
[2]Washington, DC: AEI Press, 1991.



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liberal academics such as Lester Thurow, and from administration officials. But it has now become apparent that German labor costs are so uncompetitive that future Mercedes will be made in America.

In short, there are swings and roundabouts, with first this and then that mix of private enterprise and government participation seeming to be optimal, even in a single country. Furthermore, even if one system could be identified as optimal at a given time, it is not clear that it would survive transplantation, as Johnson, in his *MITI and the Japanese Miracle* points out in the case of Japan:

> ...other nations seeking to emulate Japan's achievements might be better advised to fabricate the institutions of their own developmental states from local materials...The Japanese learned to cooperate effectively with each other as a matter of national survival...Lacking a comparable consensus on goals, the United States might be better advised to...unleash the private, competitive impulses of its citizens rather than add still another layer to its already burdensome regulatory bureaucracy.[3]

## *The Need for Modesty*

DOES THIS mean that economics can tell us nothing—or nothing very useful—about the relationship of economic structures to economic performance, and of the latter to political institutions? Such a conclusion goes too far, at least if we are modest and appropriately tentative in our conclusions, and do not strive for a spurious exactitude. In short, if we remember that, as Berger puts it, the social sciences "can never do more than provide partial, provisional, and in principle refutable interpretations of human reality."[4]

It seems not unreasonable to suggest that, comparing extreme ends of the spectrum, economies relying most heavily on individual initiative—the market economies—perform better than those which rely heavily on central direction. That is, they grow faster and distribute the fruits of growth both more efficiently and more equitably (to each in accordance with his contribution), and perhaps even more equally. The American millionaire may have more television sets, cars and air conditioners than his poorer brethren, but they, too, will own many of these non-necessities. The poor in the centrally directed economies of Africa and the former Soviet Union, on the other hand, will often not know such luxuries exist, much less contemplate owning them.

Of course, as Mancur Olson warns us in his classic *The Rise and Decline of Nations*,

> ...the fact that a country with an unusually high growth rate has this or that distinctive trait provides no justification for the

[3]Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1982.

[4]Peter Berger, *The Capitalist Revolution* (New York: Basic Books, 1988). Keep in mind Robert Solow's admonition: "...the interests of scientific economics would be better served by a more modest approach. There is enough for us to do without pretending to a degree of completeness and precision which we cannot deliver. To my way of thinking, the true functions of analytical economics are best described informally: to organize our necessarily incomplete perceptions about the economy, to see connections that the untutored eye would miss, to tell plausible - sometimes even convincing - causal stories with the help of a few central principles, and to make rough quantitative judgments about the consequences of economic policy and other exogenous events." "Economics: Is Something Missing?" in William N. Parker (ed.), *Economic History And The Modern Economist* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986, p. 23.



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inference that there is a causal connection.[5]

So we cannot conclude with absolute certainty that a country's free markets cause its affluence. But when countries with widely divergent economic structures perform very differently; when the most significant success is had by the most market-oriented (America); when the most cataclysmic failures are experienced by the most centrally planned (USSR); when successful market-oriented economies collapse after adopting central planning (Cuba); and when failed planned economies revive after adopting at least a sufficient number of market reforms to liberate fledgling entrepreneurs from the toils of the planners (Argentina), it seems not unreasonable to conclude that market economies work, and that highly centralized, planned economies do not. At least, we are entitled to elevate such a hypothesis to a rebuttable presumption.

At least, that is, at the extremes—the United States compared with the USSR; Chile with Cuba, etc. Again, when we get to the middle of the spectrum, things get harder. The development of the "Asian tigers" (South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore) can be cited as proof that market economies—for these countries are claimed as "one of us" by those in the free-market-camp—produce widely distributed prosperity. Alternatively, it might be argued that government intervention, of the sort practiced in Asia, does so, and with less social disruption.

That both free market adherents and those who favor more than a dollop of government intervention claim the East Asian economies as their own should come as no surprise. The economies of the ten East Asia countries[6] grew at an average annual rate of more than 4.5 per cent between 1975 and 1990, while those of other developing countries were stagnant. South Korea, China and Singapore, three countries with governments not known either for their total dedication to free markets or for their devotion to democracy during this period, led the pack. But free market Hong Kong was not far behind. Most of these countries have employed export controls, relied on state ownership, regulated financial markets to keep capital costs low, "picked winners" and in other ways relied as much on a guiding hand as on an invisible one. In short, they have not relied on markets to fuel their growth to the extent that America has. But neither have they attempted to exercise control from the center to the same degree as the former Soviet Union, or as the less developed African states whose state-run shambolic economies are an international scandal.

Whether the East Asian countries represent a new model for a "middle way" to economic prosperity, or whether the extensive intervention by their governments will in the end prove to have reduced consumer welfare and ossified the protected producer sector, we do not know. Nor do we know whether their mix of markets and intervention would work in other less stable, less homogenous, less disciplined and less cohesive societies—indeed, whether it will continue to work in their own. On this point, the evidence demands a Scottish verdict—we don't know enough to identify an optimum mixture of free markets and government participation that will, in all places and at all times, maximize growth. Indeed, we do not know whether there is a universally valid mixture. But what we do know is not trivial.

Within that portion of the spectrum occupied by Western industrial countries, America's relatively greater reliance on markets produces economic results superior to those obtained by Europe's more

[5]New Haven: Yale University Press: 1982.

[6]Hong Kong, South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, Philippines, China.



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interventionist governments. Incomes are higher, inflation lower, and unemployment significantly less—largely because labor and other markets are more open and flexible here. Doubters need only compare the Reagan boom with Eurosclerosis.

In this country, in our time, government intervention in markets destroys wealth—witness the gains in productivity and welfare following the deregulation of our energy, transportation and communications industries.

Finally, we have learned—to our regret—that democracy is not a necessary predicate to economic growth. Harvard's Andrei Shleifer calls "the emergence of the secure-property-rights dictator" a "puzzle," and cites the example of Chile under Pinochet as "striking." And so it is—as are South Korea and Taiwan. When per capita income soars, inflation remains tame and unemployment is almost non-existent—all while political dissidents disappear and torturers thrive—one must concede that authoritarianism, capitalism and prosperity can co-exist.

Fortunately, we know something else: that prosperity creates pressures for democratization. Thus, John Helliwell, of Harvard and the University of British Columbia, concludes from an analysis of data for 125 countries in the years 1976 to 1985, that the higher the level of a nation's per capita income, the more likely it is to have a high degree of democracy. And no wonder: an emerging middle class will demand a share of political power, and an entrepreneurial class freedom from government restrictions. That is what happened in Chile, South Korea, and Taiwan; apparently was likely to happen in Hong Kong before it was abandoned to the communist Chinese; and is what everyone hopes will happen in China itself. Entrepreneurs have direct dial telephones and fax machines, devices that eventually become the capitalists' equivalent of the old-line revolutionaries' bombs and bullets.

So, although democracy is not a precondition, and indeed may impede economic development in the early stages of a nation's growth—that is precisely at the time at which incomes are often being redistributed radically and income inequalities are becoming more visible—some form of capitalist, more-or-less market economy does seem to be a necessary pre-condition for that prosperity. Capitalism, Irving Kristol reminds us in his *Two Cheers for Capitalism*, "does deliver on its promises... does improve people's standard of living...." And, although we may not be able to establish a causal relationship between that prosperity and democracy, or argue compellingly that capitalism is a sufficient condition for a liberal society, we can say, with Kristol, that "a capitalist order is...peculiarly congenial to a large measure of personal liberty...[T]hough capitalism may not be a sufficient condition for a liberal society, it does seem to be a necessary condition of it." Gabriel Almond goes further, concluding from an extensive review of the literature, that "the historical, the logical, and the statistical evidence for this positive relation between capitalism and democracy is quite persuasive."

## *Implications for Policy*

THEREFORE, political reform—democratization—does not seem to be a necessary predicate to economic reform; economic reform—a movement away from centralized control—does seem to be a necessary predicate to economic growth and prosperity; economic reform and its attendant prosperity seem to favor political reform, though not always, not everywhere, not in invariant proportions. And nothing is forever. Prosperous democracies can regress to authoritarianism, either in the face of economic difficulties, or of a different ideology that seems to respond to the grievances that accumulate even in prosperous democra-



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cies. So, too, capitalist market economies can, sometimes in one leap, sometimes in tiny steps, become centrally planned ones.

More, we do not know. But knowing that we do not know with certainty what links exist between economic and political structures, and between political structures and prosperity, is itself a valuable bit of knowledge. For it permits us to question two foreign and security policies that have gained consensual acceptance: stepped-up aid programs, and the hollowing out of our military.

1. *Aid to developing countries.* It is now widely accepted that aid to developing countries rarely produces the desired results. Whether because the benefits are squandered by statist regimes that prefer building empty stadia, huge cathedrals and roads to nowhere to improving the quality of village water supplies; or because a ruling elite, often including the nation's leading capitalists, expropriates for itself the benefits intended for the impoverished masses; or because the genuinely humane intentions of the donors are negated by Western exporters who convert aid programs into export subsidy schemes, aid rarely works—and for "works" I use Peter Berger's definition: it works if it initiates or contributes to "a process of ongoing economic growth by which large masses of people are moved from poverty to an improved standard of life."

What is less well understood is that, despite the recognized failure of past aid programs, we are about to step up our contributions to them. Of course, since foreign aid has become the policy that dare not speak its name, we have had to find a new name for it. We have done so: global environmentalism. By signing on to the global warming treaty, the United States has committed itself to the tender mercies of a vast new United Nations bureaucracy, one that intends to redistribute income to poorer nations, allegedly so that they may improve their environments. As with more conventional aid programs, so with the new, greener ones: it is impossible to quarrel with the good intentions of the donor-proponents. But is it possible to condemn their naivete, their failure to recognize that the global warming treaty is merely another in a long line of devices designed to redistribute income from North to South; that such redistribution reduces pressures on less-developed countries to get their economic houses in order; and that government-to-government income transfers pass through too many sticky fingers for them ever to trickle down to their intended beneficiaries.

Of course, if aid led to prosperity, and prosperity to democracy and stability, the income transfers contemplated by environmentalists would be desirable. But given the uncertainty of these linkages, the efficacy of their "aid-not-trade" policy—environmentalists were prominent in the ranks of those opposing the North American Free Trade Agreement and are decidedly unenthusiastic about the new GATT agreement—becomes suspect, to say the least.

2. *Hollowing out of the military.* Experts in these matters, with Dick Cheney perhaps the most prominent, say that we are once again engaged in a "hollowing out" of our armed forces—lowering recruiting standards, reducing training exercises, cutting stores of spare parts and maintenance levels. All of this because we believe that Russia, now that it has replaced total repression with a combination of tanks and ballots—call it "democracy," for purposes of this paper—will begin a virtuous upward spiral to prosperity, peace and democracy. After all, those things do seem to go together, as I have already pointed out.

The problem with such a deterministic belief is that it has a very good chance of being wrong. This, not for the reasons usually given: that the Russian people, beset by plummeting living standards and social chaos, will decide that democracy and economic reform are mugs' games,



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and reinstall something akin to the old Communist dictatorship; or that the military, shorn of perks and privilege, horrified by the shrinkage of the Russian empire and international disrespect for Mother Russia, will take over; or that a charismatic leader, such as Vladimir Zhirinovksy, combining the most popular bits of fascism, communism, nationalism and anti-semitism, will prevail in a legitimate, democratic election. Any of those things may happen. More likely, however, is a continuation of economic reform, an eventual reversal of the economy's slide, *and* a resurgent desire to become a world power to protect Russians in neighboring states, and to secure the nation's borders from states increasingly in Germany's economic sphere of influence. In short, a partially reformed and revitalized economy capable of sustaining a military which is in turn capable of supporting the aggressively expansionist foreign policy that the totally socialized economy could not. In other words, prosperity but no peace.

If this formulation is correct—if prosperity and economic development do not inevitably lead to democratization and an abandonment of imperialist yearnings, but are equally consistent with authoritarianism and foreign policy adventurism—we might reconsider the nature of the economic assistance we are prepared to offer Russia. For to strengthen a Russia that is best left weak may prove a mistake that will haunt us for years to come.

After all, if we really believed that prosperity inevitably brings with it freedom and peace, we should lift the world embargo on Iraq, in the hope that the rising incomes that would result would create a middle class yearning to be free—and capable of satisfying that yearning. And we would abandon efforts to link access to American markets to domestic reform by our trading partners. It is fashionable these days to consider such access a benefit we bestow on worthy countries, those that manage their internal affairs in a way we find acceptable. Behave badly, we say, and we will not let you sell to us. Leave aside the question of the cost to American consumers of banning the importation of more efficiently manufactured foreign goods. Consider, instead, the inconsistency of such trade linkages with the belief that economic prosperity is a powerful engine for political reform.

So, given our ignorance about the economic and political consequences of aid we might pause before increasing the flow of aid to developing countries. And given our even greater ignorance about the relationship between prosperity and the political system it might engender, we might rethink our assumption that a more prosperous Russian bear will prove an agreeable playmate, permitting us to embrace it, unarmed. Prosperity certainly means greater strength, but it is less certain that that strength will be used in a benign fashion. □



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# O! What a Fall was There

## *Reflections on the Decline of Britain*

Anthony Hartley

NEARLY ONE hundred years ago, Brooks Adams published a short essay called "The Decay of England." Basing his views on the poor performance of the British army in the Boer War, the decline of English agriculture, a lack of entrepreneurial spirit ("the slackness of London tradesmen"), and the part played by beer in Dickens's novels, Adams foretold the end of Britain's nineteenth-century preponderance. He did not welcome this, since he regarded England as a "fortified outpost of the Anglo-Saxon race," whose future inability to guarantee the European balance of power would soon require America "to fight her own battle whether she will or no."

A hundred years later this prophecy has largely been realized. Subsequently Britain was to help repel two German attempts at expansion, but the effort was an exhausting one, and, after 1945, the United States took over the uncomfortable business of maintaining the European balance of power, as Adams had foreseen. Britain ceased to be an empire—the most extensive collection of territories ever accumulated by a European power was disposed of in some twenty-five years—and is still criticized for backwardness and sloth, most notably by British journalists. It is also still afflicted by the bitter taste of a national orgy of self doubt. Thirty years after the end of empire the shock is dying away, but it still visibly affects those traditional governing classes who once acted with as supreme a self-confidence as the Achesons and Lovetts who became their replacements in the United States after 1945.

The liquidation of empire was, on the whole, well managed. It did not include any episode as traumatic as France's departure from Algeria. Nor did Britain suffer enemy occupation in World War II. On the contrary in 1940, by a supreme effort and a heroic demonstration of national unity, it enjoyed one of the most brilliant episodes of its history. For any Englishman it seemed in the nature of things that Hitler should join the line of European conquerors—Philip II, Louis XIV, Napoleon—who had unsuccessfully tried conclusions with his country. What happened accorded with the national myth. This apotheosis cast a glow over the subsequent relinquishment of power, which could be attributed to a disinterested moral gesture. As a student in Paris between 1947 and 1951, I felt proud of this record. It seemed that Britain was better governed than France, with its political scandals and its fleeting ministries. Of our moral superiority there was little question.

Later the glow faded. It was borne in on us that there is no such thing as a free lunch. We were left in a cold world, in reduced circumstances, with the fading glow of victory and a sense that something was wrong with

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the way we were governed. In 1963 I wrote a book, *A State of England*, where I used the phrase "Loss of power means loss of purpose." Indeed. By then Britain was going through the so-called "Swinging Sixties," and I was appalled by the triviality of intellectual fashion and the irrelevance of what was on offer from the prophets of the media. The "Swinging Sixties"!—Good Lord! In fact, we were preparing to swing from a rope of our own making as we sought to enter the competitive world of the European Economic Community (EEC) while wrecking our schools, and as we burbled about the wickedness of nuclear weapons while Khrushchev had them transported to Cuba. Meanwhile, we were distracted and satisfied by those oh so many brilliant people, those "sound" treasury officials and "dynamic" company chairmen who, somehow or other, never succeeded in pushing the country into earning its living or its people into working harder. It was a horrible time. It is hard to describe the feeling of deep depression that resulted from all this cheery chatter of the new Carnaby Street culture, while England got poorer under a Labour Prime Minister who promised everything that public relations recommended.

## *The Great Retreat*

THE LOSS OF nerve that afflicted the principalities and powers of British life at this time is not perhaps surprising. Already before the First World War a Conservative intellectual, Lord Hugh Cecil, had seen what might be coming:

> Losses to a nation may be so great that they change the character of the nation itself. It would be so with us if we lost our dominions beyond the seas.

Indeed it seemed reasonable to suppose that a considerable upheaval in national life would follow a gradual perception of loss of power. But the perception was very gradual. As late as 1960 few people were conscious of the full consequences of what was happening, though their judgments and attitudes were already beginning to reflect the continuous acceptance of an ethos of retreat and the pessimism it engendered.

The process itself was not particularly surprising. Withdrawal from control of the colonies was perhaps the most easily explicable aspect of Britain's decline. It was Sir John Seely who described the British empire as having been acquired "in a fit of absence of mind," but there was also a logic to its extension. Behind those small colonies, those bases and coaling-stations strung out along the world's sea routes, lay a concept of imperial strategy that concerned the road to India and Australia. Even before the Second World War, however, such measures as the Statute of Westminster (1931) and the India Act (1935) had pointed the way towards an evolutionary policy of independence for the colonies. A more remote approach to empire had already been sketched by Lugard's strategy of "indirect rule" in Africa. Indeed, there had always been those who disliked colonies and regarded them as a waste of money. These voices had never been totally silenced even by the drums and trumpets of Disraeli's Imperial Idea, and now Britain's economic difficulties seemed to recommend the cutting down of overseas commitments. Thus the gradual dispersal of the empire appeared less novel than it actually was, when viewed as a cumulative process.

The moment that independence came to the Indian sub-continent, the old imperial strategy disintegrated. There was no longer an Indian army east of Suez at Britain's disposal, and, though brilliantly successful campaigns against Chinese Communist guerrillas in Malaysia and Sukarno's Indonesia in Borneo provided a suitable last hurrah for British colonial administration, a continued British presence in the Indian ocean, during the Sixties was



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felt to be too much of a military and financial strain. Economic difficulties, a liberal *zeitgeist* (particularly strong in the United States, Britain's principle ally and successor as leading Western power, during the struggle with Soviet Communism), the strain on military resources of new commitments along the Rhine—these were the proximate causes of the rapidity with which the Empire disappeared. The longer-term cause was perhaps the very brilliance, and therefore fragility, of the achievement itself.

The first problem posed by the retreat from empire was, naturally enough, one of foreign policy. If its priority was no longer the defense of empire, in what direction should it turn? There were those who would have wished to adopt policies demonstrating the superior morality of a power that had divested itself of empire. Should we shun nuclear weapons along with the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND), consort with the non-aligned and spout good intentions at the United Nations? That was always a fringe alternative, really no alternative at all. Or should we stick to the familiar role of the closest and most candid friend of the United States—Greeks to the Rome of America, as Macmillan put it in one of his ironic asides. Self-preservation and the balance of power certainly indicated enthusiastic support for the North Atlantic Alliance as a defense against the ecumenical ambitions of Russian Communism. That support was given. NATO was a satisfactory arrangement for successive British governments, its creation having been an objective of the Labour administration after the war.

But if Britain favored the Atlantic Alliance, would it not be logical for it to join the newly formed EEC which provided an economic base for the alliance and whose immediate motivation had been the Cold War and the urgency of German rearmament? When Acheson said that Britain had not found a "role" he was not so much giving friendly advice as a hefty shove towards Brussels. To do what the Washington "Atlanticists" wanted would solve the problem of where Britain was to stand in a world that increasingly required membership in a trading bloc. It also had the advantage of giving the Foreign Office something constructive to do—a lot more to do, indeed—and of overcoming the depression that had reigned there during the Fifties.[1] It was no accident that Foreign Office officials became eager partisans of entry into the European Community. The pursuit of accession gave them a policy where they had had none, and its attraction for them was increased by de Gaulle's evident opposition. Not only was the Foreign Office's importance enhanced by the operation, but there was an adversarial element in it which added a special zest.

The face of British foreign policy was changed. The adaptation to the loss of empire seemed to have been made. After de Gaulle's veto it became the policy of the British government not to take no for an answer. Unfortunately, the British people, even the educated part of them, remained in ignorance of the reasons for joining the EEC; they were inadequately informed both of its implications and of the nature of the organization they were joining. Thus the new challenge did not produce in Britain that enlivening psychological effect that had been anticipated—by the present writer amongst others. Instead, as in other European countries, there was growing irritation at the stream of rules and directives from Brussels, many of them incomprehensible and easy targets for ridicule by press and politicians. Unlike other member-

[1]See Evelyn Shuckburgh, *Descent to Suez: Diaries 1951-56* (London, 1986). A specimen entry for April 19, 1955, gives the tone: "Everything is in a mess—the economic prospects very bad, relations with the Arabs, Asiatics, Chinese, Russians very bad, no longer any lead in the atomic field." The odd thing was that he cared.



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states, there was little sense in Britain of the Community's long-term ambitions. A bureaucracy which saw itself as benevolent was seen by the British people as interfering, petty and out of touch with reality. We were embarked on the road to the Danish referendum of May 1992.

An attempt to give Britain a new direction, which would excite the interest of its people after the lassitude following on loss of empire, and which had been viewed by Prime Ministers like Macmillan and Heath as a cure for the "British disease," ended in an institutional impasse, with squabbling over minute constitutional changes and a major political quarrel over the Maastricht treaty, already out of date when it was signed. Europe has so far provided for Britain no vocation with anything like the attractiveness of the old imperial one. It may be that the country had entered the European Community too late to catch its moment of idealism. Take the vision away, and what remained was bureaucratic chaffering and political log-rolling, useful, no doubt, but hardly inspiring.

## *A Class Adrift*

ONE OF THE effects of the imperial adventure had been to build up a governing class, educated in the schools modeled on Arnold's Rugby and with values formed by the experience of ruling territories overseas. For the English middle-classes, and the intelligent boys from Scottish and Welsh grammar schools, the existence of empire meant a career open to their talents. What they acquired in the course of a life spent in the service of the Crown were qualities such as a confident energy, independence of judgment, responsibility, loyalty, and a sense of justice. That, at any rate was the ideal. Knowledge of empire brought them a wider world than they would otherwise have known and an ennobling, if burdensome, sense of service. This was the spirit expressed by Virginia Woolf's uncle, Fitzjames Stephen, when he wrote in the 1860s: "I for one, feel no shame when I think of the great competitive examination which has lasted for just 100 years and whose first paper was set on the field of Plassy and the last (for the present) beneath the walls of Delhi and Lucknow." It was a civil servant's metaphor, but it conveys something of the pride and effort that informed the administrators of the British empire. Moreover, since this caste contained some of the most energetic and active parts of the population, a whiff of this ethos was passed on as an ideal to the country at large. Britain owes to its imperial experience rigorous standards of public behavior and the high prestige of the British state at home as well as abroad. Success is indivisible, and the empire seemed a guarantee of the superiority of the country's political system. It helped to build up around the state a protective nimbus of moral capital which was to carry Britain through two world wars.

The disappearance of this tonic element in British life left the class that had been informed by it adrift. Those who had concerned themselves with the administration of global power over huge territories and vast distances could not easily transfer their activity to the accumulation of wealth or the creativity of the entrepreneur, though many of them were to become merchant bankers (the City of London was, in some ways, the continuation of the empire by other means—an empire touched by the finger of Midas). But their real occupation was gone; there is no doubt that the changed situation seriously demoralized the so-called "establishment" in Britain. In the years after loss of empire they were singularly unable to cope with the new problems set before them.

## *An Anti-Industrial Culture?*

CONFUSION WAS understandable, but why should Britain have been so incapable of resolving its commer-



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cial and industrial problems? Here the past possession of empire added certain negative factors. Even in the nineteenth century, the priority assigned by British statesmen to imperial questions had been partly responsible for a neglect of the decline in trade, as competition from Germany and America began to tell. Disraeli did not give half the attention to this that he gave, for instance, to the Eastern Question. Before the First World War only Joseph Chamberlain seriously addressed the matter, and his "imperial preference" could hardly have been the answer. Apart from anything else, Chamberlain thought of imperial preference primarily as a unifying factor for the empire rather than as a remedy for the British balance of payments. As Chamberlain's biographer, J.L. Garvin, put it, "the question of empire...could no longer be separated from the question of employment."[2] Later on came the controversy over free trade and cost of living. In Chamberlain's mind empire and trade were in symbiosis, with empire (i.e. its power in the world) being paramount.

Between the wars, Britain's economy did not do badly. While some of the older industries like textiles and coal mining declined in the Twenties, the recovery from the slump was better than that in other countries, with new industries coming on and national inventiveness showing what it could do in the years immediately before the Second World War. Automobiles and later airplanes, artificial fibers, plastics, and electrical goods provided new employment, mainly, however, in the South of England. The development of penicillin and the jet engine in the Thirties provided a notable advantage when war came.

After 1945, however, Britain found itself with aging factories and infrastructure, with its currency reserves and overseas investment dissipated and a government which, after wartime promises and expectations, felt itself committed to expensive schemes of social improvement. Clement Attlee's post-war Labour government, no doubt, had to fulfill wartime promises by the creation of the welfare state. But it squandered Marshall Aid by failing to use it for investment, and its nationalization program bureaucratized and finally destroyed large sectors of industry. Also, rather than increasing national income, it stressed redistribution of a cake that was to become smaller and smaller. Since then there has been no end of the difficulties attending the management of the economy. They speeded the end of empire and contributed to the deterioration of Britain's position in the world, until, in 1979, the British ambassador in Paris in a despairing retirement dispatch could complain how hard it was to conduct the foreign policy of a country whose affairs were so ill-managed.

Britain's post-war economic failure has been variously explained. Theories range from the historical view taken by Martin Wiener, who believes that Britain had had an "anti-industrial" culture, to specific criticism of the financial and economic policies followed by successive post-war British governments, lack of investment, failure to develop technology, and undue deference to the City of London. In his account of Britain's post-war industrial decline Sidney Pollard points to the Treasury's "contempt for production" as being to blame. He also described British trade unions as "among the most irresponsible and destructive unions in Europe,"[3] a judgment borne out by the improvement in industrial productivity following the change in trade union legislation under Mrs. Thatcher. In 1977 ten million working days were lost in strikes; between September 1992 and September 1993: 622,000.

The imperial experience also made its unfortunate contribution, one in addition to

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[2]J.L. Garvin, *Life of Joseph Chamberlain*, Vol. III 1895-1900 (London: Macmillan, 1934), p. 19.

[3]Sidney Pollard, *The Wasting of the British Economy* (London, 1982).



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the distraction effect already referred to. The belief that governments can take successful economic initiatives within the framework of a type of state socialism was encouraged by the frequency of resort to such solutions in colonies, where only a primitive market economy existed. Whatever the conclusions reached, however, there was little doubt about the increasing pressure of industrial competition as the European Community constructed a new trading bloc on Britain's doorstep and tariff-lowering negotiations began under the auspices of GATT. At the beginning of the Sixties, and after losing the initial advantages it had enjoyed in exporting after the end of the war, British industry was under attack even in its home market—something that neither its management nor its trade union leaders appeared to realize.

It is not easy to apportion the blame for Britain's industrial failure, but if preoccupation with empire was one part of the explanation, educational theories that systematically underestimated the importance of hard work and presented vocational education as an inferior option were another. No doubt, the use by government of Keynesian techniques to put off the evil day of fundamental change must also be held responsible. It is a mistake to spend more than one possesses, and Britain has lived at a higher rate than it could afford for some time, given its fascination with the "noble" theme of foreign affairs.

All that having been said, it may be that in the future historians will look at this complex problem a little differently. Now that similar chickens are coming home to roost in other Western European countries—notably France and Germany—it is possible to think that Britain may have reached a particular stage on a path common to European countries in the second half of the twentieth century, but rather earlier than others. Now it looks as though it has been Germany over the last few years which might be described as "wasteful and profuse." In fact, so many aspects of Britain's economic and social difficulties over the last thirty years recall present-day phenomena in Western Europe or the United States that it no longer seems possible to speak of a merely "British disease" and necessary to speak of a Western one. The decline of the open-ended welfare state, the rise of an "underclass," distinguished by an illiteracy which deprives them of the ability to work at tasks requiring accuracy and sobriety for their fulfillment, the crises arising from overseas immigration into cities already beset by problems of poverty and the break-up of families—all these symptoms are common to industrial societies in Western Europe and America. To them economic depression has, over the last five years, added greater employment and the resulting political instability. For many years Britain's economic failure stood out as a peculiar exception in a particularly favorable conjuncture, like a man who is unable to pick up a coin in the street. Now others have joined the club.

## *Debauching Education*

BRITAIN, UNLIKE Germany, was to have no *Wirtschaftswunder* to compensate for the disappearance of power. But, in the Sixties, as the Macmillan era drew to its end and a sense of national stagnation began to creep over politicians and officials, the desperate search began for some formula that would improve the country's performance. Often this took the shape of waiting for Godot. But Godot turned out to be Harold Wilson.

The great and good who had previously governed the British empire or presided over changes of direction in public policy once again found reforms to recommend, but they were all too often reforms indicative of a crisis of nerve or confusion of spirit than substantive proposals of the kind put forward by the great Victorian legislators. Since, at this time, the supposedly egalitari-



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an society of the United States was deemed to supply a favorable environment for industry and business, should it not be imitated in Britain by getting rid of an "elitist" educational system? It was at this time that Anthony Crosland, with a frivolity that is shocking even thirty years later, decided to abolish the grammar school which had been for generations the path to higher education for bright working and lower middle class boys. In her biography of her husband, Susan Crosland describes how, on becoming Secretary of State for Education, he explained his intentions to her:

> "If it's the last thing I do, I'm going to destroy every fucking grammar school in England," he said. "And Wales, and Northern Ireland."
>
> "Why not Scotland?" I asked out of pure curiosity.
>
> "Because their schools come under the Secretary of State for Scotland." He began to laugh at his inability to destroy their grammar schools.[4]

The Crowther Report (1959) talked of education as "an investment in national efficiency," describing the new comprehensive school as "an effective sign of that unity in society which our age covets." But is it the business of schools to act as mere social symbols? And, in 1993, can anyone concerned with British education regard comprehensive schools in the light of a contribution to national efficiency? Moreover the report went on to do something worse. Applying the analogy of the Public School system to the inappropriate circumstances of state secondary schools, it suggested that "...teenagers...need, perhaps before all else, to find a faith to live by...Education can and should play some part in their search." This was to make a start on that downward path of regarding knowledge as a relatively unimportant part of schooling, a process that was to lay waste British primary and secondary state schools. Instead of learning, children were offered a delusive ideology of equality, "self expression," that attached no importance to achievement or, indeed, to the capacity to earn one's own living.

This was a conception of education proffered by men and women who did not lack idealism, but who saw no contradiction in depriving pupils of the advantages which had endowed themselves with academic distinction or in destroying schools with a long tradition of excellence and substituting an undisciplined confusion. Since educational ladders did not fit the egalitarian pattern and to climb their rungs was "elitist," why not knock the ladder away? The educational story of the Sixties in Britain is of men betraying the values by which they themselves had lived, albeit for the best motives. No wonder that guilt permeates a book like Noel Annan's *Our Age*, which is an account of these changes. Lord Annan, who ended as the Vice-Chancellor at the University of London, asks the question "Was our age responsible for Britain's decline?" To which the answer might be "Yes, since all of you, politicians, Vice-Chancellors, educational theorists and the rest, helped to destroy that stock of ability by which your country lived." Lack of self-confidence combined with a desire to be regarded as apostles of the new modernity to make the media increasingly the originators of a growing tide of criticism of established institutions. There was a dialectical process here. If court officials regarded the private lives of royalty as material for helpful little paragraphs in gossip columns, it is little wonder that journalists harried members of the royal family when their private lives offered an opportunity. If bishops played politics, it is not surprising that politicians attacked bishops, and that more irreverent people mocked the clergy. How else could one react to the Dean of St. Paul's doing a parachute jump from the peristyle to inaugurate

[4]Susan Crosland, *Tony Crosland*, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1982), p. 148.



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a "Youth Week"? Acerbic criticism directed against what were deemed to be old-fashioned institutions was often met by obviously silly attempts to show oneself young and "relevant"—efforts in which both common sense and the dignity of office were lost. Criticism of authority assumed such proportions that even schemes whose benefits were widely admitted had only to appear for them to be overwhelmed by a wave of criticism, much of it ill-informed. Public works, such as a new Thames bridge or the redevelopment of the waste areas of the old docklands, were attacked by supposed representatives of the "community," set on by the press and obstructed by lobbies. Sometimes it seemed that, like an aging mushroom, Britain was dissolving itself in its own acidulous juices. The media too had their mushroom growth, more and more becoming active players in the political game and enthusiastic leaders in the campaign against the past.

## *Thatcher's Impact*

THE PROCESS OF the assault on authority accelerated on the coming to power of Margaret Thatcher. She had a surgeon's mandate to save a national economy that was on its last legs, coming to office shortly after the country had suffered the indignity of receiving the largest loan ever granted by the International Monetary Fund. But the operation was painful, undulled by anesthetic. Cuts to grants for the performing arts, threats to lay sacrilegious hands on the BBC, less money for universities, a freeze on teachers' pay, tough measures with the trade unions—as these things occurred, protest from the liberal chattering classes rose to a roar. In fact, in some circles the Thatcher government was hardly considered as representing Britain at all. A season at London's National Theatre was incomplete without a *proletkult* play blaming the miseries of the characters on "Thatcherism." During the Falklands campaign a BBC correspondent asked the Prime Minister, "Are you going to withdraw your troops?"—"Your troops," not Britain's! The aged Harold Macmillan emerged, like some latter-day Chatham, to denounce privatization as selling off the family heirlooms. Oddly enough, the British electorate remained contented. Mrs. Thatcher was elected three times and remained in office longer than any Prime Minister since Lord Liverpool, more than a century and a half earlier. In 1990, after an insufficiently prepared attempt to change the basis of local taxation, the discontented and the rejected within the Conservative Party, what Alan Clark was to call the *salon des refusés*, had the opportunity of taking their revenge and splitting their own party. Thus ended a remarkable effort at restoring British self-respect and winning England renewed international repute—not least in the United States.

In the Sixties, criticism of British society and its institutions, consequent on a feeling of national failure, had largely been fueled by a middle-class demand for a more egalitarian society. When, however, Thatcherism promised the creation of a society in which status played a lesser role, and the differentiating factor between classes became largely economic, then those who had derided paternalism and the values dispensed by the old Oxbridge teaching began suddenly to perceive the merits of Tory knights of the shire and to wonder whether the old-fashioned concepts of responsibility, loyalty, and fair play, molded by the administration of empire, had not more to be said for them than the bustling, ruthless activity of the entrepreneur. The chattering classes had asked for a more egalitarian society and now they found it inhabited by figures whom they disliked. The difficulty was that only the entrepreneur, with all his disadvantages, could produce the economic growth the country needed. True, economic growth itself could reasonably be said to be destructive of old values, but Britain and its eager



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consumers could hardly do without it. Indeed, perhaps the most significant feature of the Thatcher years was the spread of entrepreneurial values among the young. Thatcherism took the risk of speeding up social change, and this, for better or for worse, transformed British social life.

After the 1980s, the lines of class conflict divided the country differently. It was no longer a question of the "establishment" on top and the rest below. There emerged an opposition between those who owed their living to the state and those who found employment in the private sector. The Thatcherite attempt to roll back the state and cut down its bounty had some unexpected victims. Having defeated the unions, after 1987, Mrs. Thatcher took on the entrenched privileges of the professions. The previous struggle was nothing to this. It was the professional middle classes who were most affected by administrative reform of aspects of the welfare state such as legal aid and the national health service. Shrieks of pain were uttered by defenders of professional standards the moment that government economies touched on their interests. A similar outcry greeted efforts to require more effective work from school teachers, at a time when the educational service was visibly breaking down.

By this time the wheel had come full circle. Those who were meant to be the servants of the state were resisting its policies. In the civil service—whose salaries, it should be noted, were fully indexed against inflation—there were those who were ready to leak documents to the political opponents of government. It was an irony that the loyalty and, on the whole, competence which the British empire had been able to command from those who worked for it had been replaced by covert disobedience, and, on occasion, downright treachery from a breed of officials, unwilling to admit change or any diminution of their own power and, often, ideologically motivated to oppose what was being done.

The history of British society after the liquidation of empire has also been that of the fading of the accompanying values. The high style of government, the sense of responsibility and justice that, at its best, went along with world power was replaced by what might be called "business values": living within one's means, hard work, rewarding entrepreneurial skills. Mrs. Thatcher's administration marked the transition to a new kind of Britain that had shed the remnants of its imperial ideology, while not necessarily being less nationalist in feeling. It was a Britain adapted primarily to the task of earning its living, where even young aristocrats, instead of going into the Guards to defend the country, went into Sotheby's or Christie's to sell it up.

That task, indeed, was so difficult that it was only by ruthlessness that it could be achieved. Just as empire had exuded a sort of ethical cocoon whose values corresponded to the requirements of government, so economic pressure gradually developed a harsher society, one willing to recognize the need for cuts in welfare, that rejected consensus of the Butskellite[5] vintage and valued determination more than compromise. The toughness that was once deployed on the more disturbed outposts of empire was now used against Arthur Scargill, the miners' union leader, and the "flying pickets" that he used to intimidate miners who rejected his revolutionary tactics. In Britain today the predominant values are those of the market. This is not so much because of any moral preference (though there is an innate morality in work) as out of necessity. In any case, the fact is demonstrated by the collapse of Socialism as a system of ideas. If the

[5]The term refers to that compromising, evasive and muddled approach to political affairs, adopted by both parties in the Fifties and Sixties, and described by an elision of the names of the Conservative Rab Butler and Labour's Hugh Gaitskell. It implies a corporatist approach to economic and social problems.



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Labour Party comes to power again, as presumably in a democratic country it must, then it will come without ideas. It has abandoned what used to be its favorite fetishes—state ownership of the "commanding heights" of the economy and redistribution of income—perhaps hoping to find them again on a pilgrimage to Brussels. The churches might provide beliefs, but sometimes appear as merely another lobby asking for money to keep the social services going. They seem to have little to put against the logic of national survival. Perhaps, as Nietzsche foretold, disappearing religion is taking humanitarianism back into the past with it.

The end of the British Empire was certainly a massive decline in power over a very short period. For that reason, it was also the beginning of a psychological confusion which has hardly yet been resolved. First there was a twenty year loss of nerve by the governing classes, marked by lack of confidence in the British people's ability to solve its own problems, particularly those which concerned the economy. The old "establishment" faded—no wonder after its demonstration of helplessness—and nothing new emerged. The Thatcher administration of 1979-1990 was the first move towards a new deal in Britain. This is why it cannot be written off, however convenient this might be. Thatcherite values will remain with us because we need them to survive.

At present, however, the ghost of Butskellism is rising foggily from the tomb of socialism, and, as recent disputes over "basic" values have shown, there is a clash between libertarian Conservatism and those who hanker after the older, paternalist ethical certainties. Such a debate might become fruitful, as it was in the nineteenth century when Matthew Arnold called for the education of the philistine *nouveaux riches*. At present it is sterile. The inability of the old governing class to pass on their values effectively is deplored with a bitterness that attaches to Mrs. Thatcher and all her works, which are deemed to include a more materialistic moral climate. Partisans of a market economy still feel a similar anger over the way that their leader was dismissed by her party. The confusion of the debate, in which the Labour Party is only marginally involved, is only equaled by the determination of the participants to ignore the context of history or the lessons of philosophy.

Arnold's words have a relevance for us today:

> If there is one need more crying than another, it is the need of the English middle class to be rescued from a defective type of religion, a narrow range of intellect and knowledge, a stunted sense of beauty, a low standard of manners.[6]

The "middle class" now covers almost a majority of the country (over 40 percent), and if the economic values which influence their lives and incite them to perform their daily tasks are to be reconciled with the higher aspirations, which once accompanied an ethos of public service, then the means is education. It was so in Victorian days when the country found a corrective to the brutalities arising out of the energies released by the Industrial Revolution. Education will save us from the sterile clash between two ethical positions which appear opposed, but really have a dialectical relationship to each other. The benevolent use of money and the development of public spirit cannot be achieved until a secure economic base is first assured. Then the tone of society can be improved and its moral unity secured through education. But not through education where teacher flatters pupil, and which is afraid to pronounce the word "elitism." Schools and universities will justify their existence as long as they show confidence in their mission of elevating those they teach.

As recently as fifty years ago Britain

[6]Matthew Arnold, *Mixed Essays* (London: Smith, Elder), 1880, p. 178.



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possessed an empire which was a rationale for national unity and a source of values in domestic political life. Now the memory of it is growing faint, but the uncertainty which has fallen upon us after its loss still remains. At present the alteration of our foreign policy and the adaptation of our beliefs and habits are no joy to us. Anger, bitterness, and a kind of self-hate well up in too many British throats, and threaten to poison the life of the nation. This is what it is, we might say, to cease to be great. Yet the British people have done so much and seen so much that no one who was present when it showed itself formidable can quite believe that it will continue in the pettiness of its present political discourse. Even after its disappearance the British Empire remains as a testimony to its capacities. Its history could be a source of strength to us today, if we chose to accept our past rather than reject it, quarrel over it, or, with our new educators, bury it. May we come to recognize our national achievement and see the work we now have to do with eyes unblurred by nostalgia or resentment. □

## *One Little Word*

The English language marks the process of national decay with a single five-letter word. When you hear it, you know things are going downhill fast. The word is "still"; as in "The United States is still the most important economy in the world," a sentence someone used on American television the other day during a discussion of the North American Free Trade Area [sic]. NAFTA was devised partly in order to prevent the process of decline; "still" reeks of the need for reassurance and comfort. It is an anxious word, which drags reluctantly after it an unspoken, half-sentence "...but maybe not for much longer." British politicians and commentators used it a good deal in the early 1960s ("Britain is still the second largest producer of motorcars in the world," "We still have the third biggest navy"). Now the United States is entering the "still" phase. The vote on NAFTA in the House of Representatives will not change that long-term process; it will merely affect the pace of a decline which began 30 years ago....

"The United States remains a superpower still," the *New York Times* reassured itself the other day. But "super-power" was a term coined in the 1960s to distinguish the Soviet Union and the United States from lesser nations. It has little meaning except in the plural, because the two of them defined each other's powers and mirrored each other's capabilities. A singular super-power, no matter how large its arsenal, is just another power. Under Clinton and his ineffectual Secretary of State, the United States jerks back and forth from helplessness over Bosnia to threats against the nuclear capability of North Korea. American diplomatic and military power has been insufficient to deal with a few hundred Somali warriors with Kalashnikovs and "technicals." If Vietnam was America's Boer war, Somalia is its Cyprus: thugs and corner-boys have demonstrated the feebleness of imperial pretensions. America's withdrawal from Somalia early next year will mark the end of empire as definitively as the pulling down of the Union Jack in Nicosia.

—John Simpson, *The Spectator*, 11/20/93



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# Three Comments

## Michael Elliott:

ANTHONY HARTLEY'S essay is squarely within a school of modern British studies best called "Regrets Only." All the tell-tale signs are there: the supposed loss of purpose that followed the end of Empire, the lament about economic decline, the head-shaking over the Swinging Sixties, the disaffection with the grubbiness of Thatcherite capitalism. I agree with some of the analysis. I think, for example, that Hartley is right in thinking that the Empire brought out the best not just of the British establishment, but also of the middle-class in Scotland and the North of England. Sometimes Hartley is just wrong; the poll-tax which proved Margaret Thatcher's nemesis in 1990 was not so much "insufficiently prepared" as just mad. As a staff member in the Cabinet Office, I was part of a team working on local government reform in 1982; if you give yourselves eight years preparation on something, you should get it right.

More broadly, I think that Hartley misunderstands the recent economic history of Britain in an important way; and fails to specify the very difficult "strategic" choices that Britain must now face. He is confused—and he is not alone—about the central "problematic" of recent history, which, shortly put is this: what did Margaret Thatcher do, and what didn't she do?

It is no good complaining, as Hartley does, about "the entrepreneur, with all his disadvantages." For the "Regrets Only" crowd, the 1980s were full of ugliness and meretricity (personally I loved them). But the plain truth is that by 1979 Britain had become a society in which it was not respectable to be rich unless you had earned your money the old-fashioned way: by inheriting it. Mrs Thatcher's economic achievement—flawed but significant—was twofold. First, she espoused a set of supply-side policies which opened up a space for risk-taking behavior. Second, she changed the political climate so that those who worked in the private sector, men and women who were not particularly interested in politics but very interested in increasing the prosperity of their families, no longer felt despised.

The transformation of the British economy was (rather than "is," since I think it is just about over) wrenching and painful. Moreover, since Britain is just about the most open economy in the developed world, it tends to be "hypercyclical," doing very well in global booms (like the mid-1980s) and very badly in global busts (the early 1990s). But notwithstanding the pain and uncertainty, most commentators, I think, accept that the competitiveness of the British economy has fundamentally improved, with inflation just about controlled and productivity showing strong gains. That is Mrs. Thatcher's achievement.

But Mrs. Thatcher was much less surefooted in assessing what Britain's place was likely to be in the post-Cold War world. This failing goes beyond the common claim that Mrs. Thatcher was a "Euroskeptic." There are very good reasons to be skeptical of the European Union, not least its scandalous unconcern (which she would surely have challenged) for the fate of people and countries to its east. For the original signatories of the Treaty of Rome, European unity was a way of exorcising the ghosts of old and deadly conflicts. Britain, whose territory had never been invaded in modern times and whose institutions had never been delegitimated, could never have the emotional attachment to unity seen in France or Germany. Moreover, Britain has always lived by trade, and alone of all the major European states, has seen continued emigration since 1945. Hence it has close ties of commerce and sentiment to places far from the European landmass. "Being European" is just more diffi-



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cult for Britain than for anyone else.

What Mrs. Thatcher failed to see was that the special relationship with the United States could never be an alternative to the gradual integration of Britain into European structures. To those of us who have been based in Washington for years it was plain by the late 1980s that the dogged—and often commendable—loyalty of London to Washington was a wasting asset.

In a strategic sense, Britain under both Mrs. Thatcher and John Major has fallen into the trap of being more royalist than the King. A new generation of American officials, Republican and Democrat, believes that Europe's prosperity (and hence America's export markets) will be enhanced by continental economic integration; they are less interested than their elders in a time-consuming policy of "divide and conquer" among the Europeans; and they want the Europeans to shoulder a heavier share of the defense burden, anywhere in the world, than they now do. All of this suggests that America's traditional ambivalence about the virtues of European unity have been decisively resolved in its favor.

This modern American bias towards European unity may turn out to be a colossal mistake: but that is for the Americans to find out. It does Britain no good whatsoever in Washington to seem to be mealy-mouthed about symbols of European unity; to pour cold water, for example, on the Franco-German army corps, or to dismiss the French penchant for grand diplomatic gestures as mere grandstanding. The British would claim that their foreign policy has been dominated by that most overrated of all British habits, pragmatism. But pragmatism without a vision of where Britain's interests lie and how they can be protected is not enough. Difficult though the strategic choice in favor of European unity may be for Britain (and genuinely it is difficult), it is hard to see what Britain gains by not making it. □

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## Martin Walker:

THE PROBLEM with Britain is the country's stubborn insistence on winning its wars. Germany and Japan were required to overhaul their political, social and economic systems after their defeat in 1945. Russia is doing the same today. Rocked by defeat and occupation in 1940, and by colonial defeats in Vietnam and Algeria, France turned (not for the first time) to a general, who saved a kind of democracy by becoming a kind of dictator.

For centuries now, Britain's right little, tight little island has, by its exertions and its good sense, been spared the great climacterics which shook a country into transformation. Not for nine centuries has Britain known enemy occupation dividing the nation between the patriots and the collaborators. And not for three centuries has it experienced the kind of violent revolution which cleaves new divisions between the disinherited and their dispossessors.

Instead, we have had to make do with elections. In this century we have endured heroic efforts to transform the structures of the old homestead by the Liberals' Lloyd George, Labour's Clement Attlee and the Conservatives' Margaret Thatcher. None, as Mr. Hartley depressingly explains, has done much more than re-decorate the rooms, shift the furniture around and spruce up the raiment and modify the employment conditions of the retainers. What he dubs "the ethos of retreat and the pessimism it engendered" may have been spruced away for a time, but never for long.

Could it be that something is wrong with the foundations, with the very institutions that our political moderation and military heroics have been able to protect?

Our great institutions have not served us well of late. Indeed, their embarrassments have added to what Mr. Hartley sees as the demoralization of the Establishment. Our Monarch presides over a dysfunctional family. Three broken marriages out of three is no



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doubt a private unhappiness, but if the Royal Family cannot discipline itself to set a decent example to the taxpayers who loyally sustain them, then what is their point?

The Crown is the keystone of a great edifice which sinks deep. Through the House of Lords, the Crown legitimizes the unelected half of our legislature. As head of the Established Church; as the object of the oath taken by the Officers corps of the armed forces; as the legal embodiment of the national system of justice with its Queen's Bench and Law Lords; and as the reason why the proper title of the elected prime minister is "Her Majesty's First Lord of the Treasury," the symbolism of the Throne weighs heavy upon us.

Mr. Hartley talks of "a twenty year loss of nerve by the governing classes." After their performance, the governed can be forgiven a loss of faith. Her Majesty's courts have to admit the perversion of justice which locked up innocent Irishmen. Her Majesty's Cabinet ministers have to admit lying to permit businessmen to be imprisoned for selling arms to Iraq, when they had been secretly licensed to do so. The Bank of England has to apologize for its unsavory kindness to the Bank of Crooks and Criminals International. The loosening ethics of Lloyd's of London has bankrupted half the gentry.

And at that other end of society, which Mr. Hartley hardly addresses, the demoralization has gone beyond the loss of imperial responsibilities and the erosion of the public school ethic. We have re-invented an underclass of the hard-core unemployed, the homeless, and the hopeless young.

The most interesting thrust of Mr. Hartley's essay is less his elegiac lament for the glorious past (with which few Brits would much disagree) than his arresting implication that Britain might be at last readying itself for an overdue climax of reform not through foreign war or domestic riot, but through a wave of national self-disgust. Mr. Hartley sees one answer in "Thatcherite values," where I can neither identify them, nor agree. He sees another in education, where few will quibble. Finally, he sees in our history "a source of strength," and he is reasonably right.

What we need now is finally to accept that verdict of another great British victory two centuries ago, when British settlers defending British rights fought and trounced German mercenaries fighting for a German King. Naturally, the British side won, thanks in part to the skills of George Washington. It is not too late to bring home the results of that victory: A Republic, a written Constitution, a Bill of Rights and a separation of powers too long entwined, too long abused, and too often mishandled. □

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## Ambrose Evans-Pritchard:

CLUSTERED AROUND a paraffin lamp, we tried to learn our Latin gerunds and study maps of colonial Africa. There were power cuts most nights, and we had to wear our duffle coats indoors because the heating thermostat was down in the fifties. The railways were on strike so the school had to charter buses to take us home at half-term. Everybody else was on strike too, it seemed. Rubbish piled up in huge mounds on the pavements, and industry was on a three day week. It was like living in a country at war, except of course that there was no war. There was no excuse whatsoever.

For an English child coming of age in the late 1970s, this memory of hopelessness is the standard against which all subsequent experiences must be judged, and seen from that point of view, things are not going as badly for Britain as Anthony Hartley, in his blacker



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moments, seems to fear. I would even argue that there has been something of a national revival over the last fifteen years, at least in Britain's comparative performance with other European countries—which is what matters most to the British sense of self-worth. Given the long lead time in changes of this kind, the improvement is not immediately obvious from published statistics. The signs are to be found in the grey zone of behavior. On a recent tour of car factories in Europe I discovered that the absenteeism rate at the General Motors plant in Luton, England, was half the level of Rüsselsheim, Germany, where GM manufactures the same car. At Japanese car transplants in England and Wales the productivity rate compares favorably with the best in the world. There is nothing wrong with the British worker these days.

In the late 1970s I can remember looking at those charts they publish in the back of *The Economist*, and despairing that Britain always seemed to have the worst profile in the industrial world: the highest unemployment, the highest inflation or thereabouts, the lowest growth rate, horrendous debt, and on and on. But this is no longer the case. British fundamentals are now better than the European average. While Belgium, Italy and possibly even Germany (which hides many of its government liabilities off its books) face the risk of a debt trap, as compound interest spirals out of control, Britain boasts remarkably healthy public finances with a debt to GNP ratio of under 40 percent.

The early 1980s were a painful time, surgery without anaesthesia in Hartley's words. Under the Thatcher retrenchment the state sector fell from a peak of 49.5 percent of GNP to 39.5 percent—a figure that includes health coverage—arguably making the British public sector as efficient as any in the world. Privatized British Steel is now the most competitive major producer of steel in Europe. British Airways, once a disaster case, is now the biggest international airline in the world, and has continued to make profits throughout the airline slump. The better British companies are as well managed as any in the global market. The problem is that there are not enough of them. But the demonstration effect is working its way through the whole of British industry.

We did what had to be done. Other countries put off the fateful day and they will pay the price for it. Germany and Italy, with their bad practices and bloated welfare regimes are perilously close to the condition of Britain in the 1970s, with one added disadvantage, political systems that are far more brittle. Both countries produce superb goods, of course, but they rely heavily on refinements of yesterday's success stories—cars, for instance, which they cannot sell so easily any more. Where are they in computer software, information technology, biotechnology?

I am convinced that Britain will prove to be the stellar performer of Western Europe over the next few years, and that Margaret Thatcher will be vindicated. But whether that is much comfort is another matter, for European society as a whole is in sharp decline, having drawn down its moral and cultural capital to the point of bankruptcy. But if any country in Europe can adapt to the challenge coming from Asia and the developing world, Britain has as good a chance as any with its outward looking traditions, its global diaspora network, and its Methodist-Quaker spirit of dissent that fosters inventiveness. The imperial experience may indeed have been the leaven of "Britishness" for two hundred years. But there is an older island character that predates the aberration of empire: the proud, brave, and feisty Elizabethan. That wasn't half bad either. □

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# Nationalism

## *Hymns Ancient and Modern*

Robin W. Fox

IN WESTERN EUROPE, the unity of the EC seems to be unraveling. The Balkans are being re-balkanized. In the Middle East, "national" identity compounded by sectarian Islam asserts itself in wars that drag in the whole world. In Africa, the "nations" that were the legacy of arbitrary colonial boundaries are riven with tribal strife, and the constantly ingenuous West is shocked to find the Zulus killing their fellow black South Africans to retain their own distinct "national" status. India, Sri Lanka, and Indonesia are repressing local nationalisms, and the "unity" of China is one of the last engineered by centralized totalitarian force, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union into its component nations. And so the sorry tale—from the Western progressive liberal point of view—continues. Why can't the world seem to settle down into nice well-ordered democratic nation-states on the Western model?

This is not the first time these questions have been raised. My own interest in nationalism was sparked early by the internationalism with which I grew up from the thirties through the fifties. Its two forms—of international socialism, and the idealistic hope in the League of Nations or United Nations—both seemed, from the start, doomed. The workers of the world just flat did not unite. On the contrary, they seemed very happy to get a chance to dish it out to the workers of other nations. And again, the sorry history of the UN (following on the League) showed that governments of the nations of the world would not unite either. The UN always seemed to me to be killed by its own premise: that world peace and good governance could come about by the cooperation of independent nation-states.

United Nations was almost an oxymoron. Nations existed to be disunited from each other, only coming together in temporary alliances out of self interest. Here it seemed that the utopian internationalists had the better idea, in that they wanted to abolish nations and achieve a "brotherhood of man" that refused to recognize artificial national boundaries. Theoretically, that made more sense, except that the boundaries just were not artificial; they were very real. And the UN by adding to its councils ever more self-declared "nations" (even if they were islands smaller than most small towns) constantly compounded its problems.

Internationalism of all varieties then seemed to be an idealistic failure. People at large just didn't think globally. But nationalism itself had major problems, not least that many "nations" and especially (but not exclusively) "new nations" were

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indeed artificial entities: the creations of colonial map makers (Kuwait is a nation?) or the Versailles Treaty carvers-up of eastern Europe. Many of these "nations" cut across more ancient racial, religious, ethnic, and linguistic boundaries, especially in Africa where whole tribes were split in this way, or forcibly incorporated with traditional enemies. This raised the issue of the relation of "nation states" to these other units. For what seemed to be required of nation states was that they *behave* like homogeneous tribes, even if this was plainly a fiction. The problem continues to plague modern "new nationalisms." The Scottish nationalists, for example, have to plaster over the tremendous differences between the lowland (Presbyterian, mercantile, urban) Scots, and the highlanders: Gaelic, Catholic, of Irish origin and only recently emerged from territorial and kinship dominated tribalism. (There were more Scots fighting *against* Bonnie Prince Charlie at Culloden than for him.) And the Republican Irish embarrassment over their northern Protestant brethren needs no elaboration.

## *Back To Fundamentals*

INSTEAD OF endlessly multiplying examples, we need to get back to the fundamental questions about nationalism: When has a "nation" reached the limits of its integration? What are the sure signs that its various ethnic, racial, territorial, religious, linguistic, and interest groups no longer feel a common bond or purpose? Most of the modern debates on "nationalism" don't begin to answer these questions. One opens a new, very large, and much-hyped book like Liah Greenfeld's *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity*,[1] hoping for fresh insights, and finds only the same dreary catalogue of facts. Most books on the "nationalism" issue are written by political scientists, sociologists, historians, politicians and other peddlers of ephemera. The psychologists occasionally have a crack at it, but they are prisoners of their schools and disagree as loudly as the nationalists themselves. Ever since Freud assured us that the Russians would never rebel against a Czar they regarded as a "little father" and whom they had incorporated into their superegos, we have learned to be wary of psychological advice in this field. It could be true that devotion to national causes is one way we escape Eric Fromm's "fear of freedom"; but that doesn't tell us "why nationalism?"

The question, of course, assumes that there *are* some fundamentals: some features of the human creature that predispose it to "nationalistic" behavior. But this is dismissed by the "nationalism-is-modern" school, for whom the phenomenon starts not with Nature but with Herder (or a bit before in the precocious cases of England and France.) Proponents of this dominant mode of thought regard "nationalism" as co-terminous with the modern nation-state, and indeed a creation of distinctly post-feudal, even industrial, social conditions. Even the most diehard of the nationalism-is-modern school, however, admit that "national sentiments" are very real. Thus E.J. Hobsbawm admits that "what is in doubt is not the strength of men's and women's longing for group identity of which nationality is one expression." "What skeptics doubt," he continues, "is the alleged irresistibility of the desire to form homogeneous nation states..."[2] Note the slippage here—from an admittedly "natural nationality" to a definitely resistible "nation state."

I doubt anyone would want to argue that we have inbuilt predispositions to form nation states. Natural selection

[1]Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1993.

[2]E. J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 187.



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would have to have been remarkably (and teleologically) prescient to have provided for that one—or even for states! But nations (if not states) are formed out of *something*, and as Hobsbawm recognizes, "longing for group identity" is one basis, if not the only one. Even more noticeable is the slippage between "nationality" ("sense of group belonging") and "nationalism"—which can only be some kind of *doctrine* of nation-state primacy.[3] Truly the state can exist without the nation and the nation precede the state (or vice-versa), and some kind of *doctrine* to justify, glorify and rationalize it all need only arise well after the historical fact (England), or alternatively precede and create that fact (Germany.) Commentators have made us familiar with, not to say sick of, all the permutations. But what the "nationalism-is-modern-not-natural" school are asserting, slyly confounds these distinctions. Nationalism and the nation-state are of course "modern." By the same token, appeals to human nature do not explain them. For Hobsbawm they are blatantly historical epiphenomena overdue for obsolescence. But as he too realizes, that naggingly persistent "national feeling" is somehow independent of all this historical jiggery pokery.

Let us put it this way: Whatever the origins, historical, social, geographical, economic, military or whatever, of nationalism and the nation-state, the one uniformity is the relative ease with which "national" sentiments can be aroused and sustained in the populations of these "modern" entities. This gives the theorists of nationalistic "modernity" a deep sense of unease, since we are clearly dealing here with deeply atavistic sentiments and motivations. It is obviously disturbing to have to argue that a social phenomenon is "modern" and a "construct" but at the same time to have to admit that it derives its emotional energy from some unknown archaic dark corners of the human psyche.

This would only be strange, however, to a theory that insisted that sentiments and emotions themselves were solely the creations of historical conditions; unfortunately that is the prevailing paradigm for the social and historical sciences. If, however, one accepts that man carries a baggage of evolutionary dispositions—mental as well as emotional[4]—then there is really no problem. The only problem is empirical: What social conditions "fit" these dispositions and what do not? I have spent a great deal of time complaining about the conditions that *fail* to satisfy these paleolithic motivations and mentations,[5] but it equally follows that, often serendipitously it is true, modern conditions will evoke and reinforce ancient (paleolithic) sentiments. Thus bureaucracy will rarely ever work since the attributes it demands are so implacably anti-paleolithic. Sociologists too have noted the persistent failure of bureaucracy, but are frustrated in their explanations since they can only look for reasons within the historical conditions of bureaucracy itself.

Nationalism, at least in its form of real and obvious national sentiments, creates the same dilemmas. Here is something that taps and indeed thrives on atavistic motives and satisfactions—some benign, some generous, some horrible, which cannot be explained as creations of nationalism (and the nation-state) itself. The his-

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[3]Isaiah Berlin in one of the most interesting, and hence most neglected, essays on nationalism, stresses the centrality of the doctrinal aspect, as well as the fact that no one predicted the durability of nationalism in the twentieth century. "Nationalism: Past Neglect and Present Power" in *Against the Current: Essays in the History of Ideas*, edited by Henry Hardy (New York: Viking, 1980).

[4]J. Barkow, L. Cosmides and J. Tooby, *The Adapted Mind* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

[5]R. Fox, *The Search for Society* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1989).



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torical contingency school is left only with various forms of manipulative or conspiracy theories, by which the gullible masses are somehow brainwashed into various ecstatic states. Hobsbawm to his credit avoids this extreme nonsense, but equally he never comes to grips with the problem raised by his vision of a non-nationalist future: what will happen if you remove this source of human satisfaction?

There are three things you can do to the paleolithic hunter that is Man (the tiny episode we call "History"—at best the few thousand years of the interglacial in which we live—has done nothing to change our basic psycho-physico-social nature that evolved over two and a half million years of the paleolithic). The three things are: You can *deny* him his evolved needs either by simple deprivation or by imposing institutions that distort them; you can *satisfy* or tap those needs either directly or by modern institutions that utilize or at least do not frustrate them; you can figure out how to *fool* the evolved system so that we utilize atavistic motives to modern ends. The current task of history and the behavioral sciences should be to utilize the insights of evolutionary biology to help sort out where we are satisfying, where frustrating and where fooling our paleolithic selves. Most contemporary savants are running in the opposite direction, and in circles to boot.

## *Up From Tribalism*

THE EVOLUTIONARY line leading to the powerful "sense of belonging" that the nationalism-is-modern school cannot deny but cannot accommodate is simple. In the non-human primates we find intense sociality within the troop, and equally intense xenophobia directed towards outsiders.[6] In our closest relatives, the chimpanzees, this goes beyond mere defense of range or territory to cooperative, predatory, cannibalistic and ultimately genocidal attacks on other groups.[7] But above all there is the strong sociality and group identification. This is reflected in the earliest of hominid societies, the australopithecines, from at least three-and-a-half million years ago. Small groups wandered the east African savannahs, scavenging and catching small game. As the scale of hunting increased with the advent of *Homo erectus*, the two-million year upsurge in brain size and social complexity took off on its upward trajectory. By the close of the paleolithic, larger bands making up "linguistic tribes" (up to five thousand individuals) with ceremonial cave centers emerged. Then came the neolithic revolution—agriculture and herding—and the rest, literally, is history.

The sequence: primate troop—australopithecine horde—paleolithic band—linguistic tribe—tribal confederation—chieftainship—tribal state, and on up to city states, kingdoms, empires, etc, is well enough known. What is not well understood is how each level draws on the lower levels. Thus the nationalism-is-modern school has a hard time dealing with the "tribal" elements of nations, and the political anthropologists often do not want to see the underpinnings of the human band or tribe as lying in the primate troop. But just as early human bands three million years ago drew on the socio-emotional strengths of their ancestral primate heritage, so the tribe drew on the strengths of the band, and, ultimately, the kingdom or state on the strengths of the tribe.

At the heart of every nation then is

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[6]Ralph L. Holloway ed., *Primate Aggression, Territoriality and Xenophobia* (New York: Academic Press, 1974); Alexander H. Harcourt and Frans de Waal eds., *Coalitions and Alliances in Humans and Other Animals* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1992).

[7]Jane Goodall, *The Chimpanzees of Gombe* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986).



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tribal feeling writ large. And this is at once both the secret of the peculiar strength of national feeling and also its potential weakness. For when the nation is too large and too heterogeneous, as many modern nation-states and super-states become, then the bounds of paleolithic credibility become dangerously stretched, and we resort to the third alternative: fooling our paleolithic emotions. (So far we seem to have succeeded best in this third case with drugs, which fool the brain into thinking they are endogenous opiates. This fooling business is a dangerous road to travel.)

One thing that characterizes the basic hominid social unit is kinship. The paleolithic linguistic tribe, while split into many bands or clans, preserved the idea that all those who spoke the same tongue were kin, usually by some legend of common descent. This was plausible, and explains what must often seem like a pathological devotion to language as a marker of social identity in modern nationalism. But the linguistic tribe was probably never more than five thousand strong. When Aristotle set that limit to the number of free citizens in an ideal city state, he knew whereof he spoke. Beyond that limit we must resort to *fictions* of kinship in order to tap (or fool) the emotions of group solidarity. Modern nationalists know this very well, and the linkage of language and "blood" (kinship) becomes an essential part of their racial rhetoric. Nations are big tribes. Thus rulers do indeed become "little fathers" of their people, and the nation itself a "mother-" or "father-land." When the "sibling-citizens" are clearly not of common descent, as in the United States or (former) USSR, then the focus has to be a sibling of a parent, as in Uncle Sam or Uncle Joe. If we can all be children (or nephews) of the same ancestors ("We few, we happy few, we band of brothers") and speak the same tongue, then we can be fooled into thinking we are the same tribe: familiars—literally of the same family.

The fiction is very effective and not only nations but religious orders and political and social movements freely use the rhetoric of kinship to arouse the same feelings of defensive solidarity. But by its very ambitions the modern industrial nation state (especially its super-state version) strains this fiction to its breaking point. Even so, "patriotic" appeals are never to self-interest but always to kin altruism ("Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country" etc.) But not only do very few people except a few cranks believe in the brotherhood of man, very few others believe that their co-citizens are really kinsfolk. If they did, they might behave better towards them. The fiction, in the end, ceases to be effective, especially if the pseudo-kinship has been forced on them. The "all those who speak the same language are kin" ruse fails miserably when one is *forced* to speak the language in question. The appeal to territory or a shared past—both elements of the troop-band-tribe scheme—is equally difficult to sustain as the territory gets too diverse and the past too diffuse or painful to be plausibly described as "shared."[8] We can draw on the primitive sense of kin-tribe solidarity just so far in supporting admittedly modern nationalism. The disaster comes when we try to force the fiction further than its bounds of plausibility. The paleo-cynic in us rebels. The shotgun marriages of modern nation-

[8]Other mechanisms for uniting large populations, like leader-worship and religion, often get inextricably blended with nationalism (or national feeling). But while they too have paleolithic roots, we must here bracket them off and reserve them for later discussion, as we must with territory, which, while obviously implicated in some nationalisms, is equally inimical to others. Indeed, nationalism often involves the destruction of local territorial alliances.



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alism are suddenly on the rocks—maintained only by force, duplicity and economic necessity.

One other way to maintain "national feeling" is the equally atavistic call to war. "Defense of the realm" or destruction of its enemies taps the deeply programmed "defend the clan" motivations and the primate xenophobia. But this is difficult to sustain over long periods with any intensity, since paleolithic "wars" were more in the nature of raids or brief skirmishes. It worked well enough with the incessant warring of small professional armies in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but could only work in short bursts in the conditions of modern total war. The appeal works very effectively, but soon outstays its welcome.

## *Small is Workable*

THE MORAL OF the tale told this way is very simple: The only nationalisms that will ultimately work will be *small* nationalisms in small national entities. These can plausibly draw on the basic motivations to sustain themselves. If the larger nation-states and super-states are to maintain themselves through the "nationalistic" mode of social integration, then the paradox is that they must try to appeal to something other than raw national sentiment to achieve this. Rallying round white, European, English-speaking, Dixie-costumed, Uncle Sam, will simply not do for the modern United States, where at least a third of the nation cannot possibly feel kinship with him. As one of my Hispanic students put it almost vehemently, "*Uncle Sam no es mi tio¡*" Some more subtle appeal, perhaps to enlightened self-interest ("you are better off here than in any nation on earth"), will have to replace the raw national appeal, which cares nothing about having superior economics, but only about being superior people. This appeal to self-interest is what at the moment seems to be tenuously holding together British and French Canada, and for that matter the English and Scots, as well as the Asian and African examples. The "national" sentiments here must work on a lower level, and as we have suggested, may give some aspirant but non-homogeneous nations like Scotland their own troubles.

In all this the USA in particular affects pious spectator status. This is all happening "elsewhere." For the optimists—the end-of-history crowd included—the world is rapidly going to adopt our own form of perfectionism and all will be democratically/capitalistically well. For the pessimists, it is the same old story of the world failing to live up to our own high standards and making its usual un-American mess of things. For the isolationists, we should leave them to it; for the internationalists, we must be the world's policeman (with or without the UN as suits us); for the pragmatists, we should intervene only when our national interests are at stake. But one finds very few people taking seriously the proposition that we are *not* some kind of utopian solution but very much part of the problem: The massive distrust of government and the growing power of separatist sentiments is as potentially destructive to us as it was to the USSR. It has happened once in our history, with terrible costs.

The coming dissolution may not be as blatantly territorial as in the Civil War[9] but it will be no less ideological, and ideology kills as surely as ever territory did. We have always, from our beginnings as a "contractual" nation, been a mish-mash of warring factions only loosely linked by "national" sentiment, however noisy that has been at times—and it has had to be noisy to drown out the dissent. Can any

[9]Although the virtual secession of Dade County, Florida, and the creation of a Spanish-speaking Cuban province there should give us pause.



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sociologist tell us how to measure how much more or less of a mish-mash we are now? The mish-mash has been held together by some very strong sense of being "American" - something that led even segregated black and native American regiments in World War II to feel "proud" of what they were defending. Does this still exist? Since the sixties nothing is certain.

The paleolithic mentality and emotions cannot be indefinitely fooled, for they are what we are. We can, of course, try to destroy them with the likes of drugs, super nation-states, and impersonal bureaucracies. But they will fight back and the fighting will get rough. Not only nationalism but a whole parade of so-called "modern social problems" from teen pregnancy epidemics and high divorce rates, to soccer hooliganism and religious fundamentalism, may well prove to be, like "ethnic cleansing," examples not of system-driven pathologies at all, but of the paleolithic organism fighting for its survival, which is, after all, the most basic thing it knows to do.[10]

Appeals to rational self-interest are always at a disadvantage, for the interest may shift. The beauty of an appeal to "national sentiment" is precisely its non-rational and often irrational nature. It is an appeal often against self-interest and for self-sacrifice. Hobsbawm's skeptics may turn out to be wrong: There is an irresistible desire to form *something*, and even if it is not a nation-state, it is homogeneous. Perhaps we could call this irresistible desire "the perennial appeal of tribalism," and try to remember that it allows for virtues that rational state bureaucracies know nothing of but which are very dear to our basic natures. Try heroism for starters. Hollywood and the sports world understand (and profit from) this very well, even if political scientists and economists find no place for it in their dreams of the "rational actor" and other fantasies of academic life.

National states will continue insofar as they supply basic needs and are small and homogeneous enough to appeal to basic sentiments of belonging. But let us never be complacent about supra-national political entities when they come into competition with the perennial appeal of tribalism. A few hundred years is not even a blink of an eye in evolutionary time. □

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[10]Soccer "hooligans" are egregiously, chauvinistically "nationalistic." Indeed they may just have discovered the elusive "moral equivalent of war" that William James saw was so necessary to "peace." I doubt this point will appeal to "Brussels" to whom the nationalistic soccer-patriots must appear as a recurrent nightmare of their worst frustrations.



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# Birds of a Feather

Angelo M. Codevilla

BOSNIA AND HAITI, Somalia and North Korea...The failure of the Clinton administration's foreign policy becomes ever more clear, even as the menacing reality of a Russia that Washington has indulged and deferred to becomes more difficult to deny. That failure, it can be argued, is the direct result of a certain cast of mind.

Today the foreign policy of the United States is well-nigh controlled by that wing of the establishment that worked to defeat the U.S. in Vietnam, championed lower U.S. defense spending and arms control, favored concessions to the Soviet Union and its surrogates, and imposed a variety of restrictions on the use of U.S. power in the world. Their performance is best understood in terms of a syndrome which is the logical result of a mentality acquired over decades—a mentality that impairs understanding of America's place in the world and makes it nearly impossible to make policy in America's interest.

What is this mentality? To answer that we have to look back to the debates of the Cold War, debates as fundamental as any in our history. Today, those debates survive as ideas embodied in people. People do not spring up new, Minerva-like, in middle age. So, whereas terms like "nationalist" and "internationalist," "isolationist" and "realist," can be stuffed with anyone's favorite meanings, decades of struggles over real issues—Vietnam, the Soviet Union, armaments, and the rest have fashioned real mental capacities and incapacities in real people. These mentalities, rather than nebulous new concepts, are affecting reactions to post-Cold War challenges.

Some argue that the "wise men" of the Eastern establishment who ran America's foreign affairs from the 1920s through the Cold War have given way to geographic and ethnic diversity.[1] But this is wrong. Those who are responsible for national security today are surely more narrowly homogeneous than ever in what matters most—their ideas and experiences. It would be easier for the proverbial camel to pass through the needle's eye than for someone to enter the senior ranks at State, Defense, or NSC who favored a U.S. victory in Vietnam, who had cheered Ronald Reagan's call in 1982 to cast communism on the scrap heap of history, or who had favored building an antimissile defense for the United States. Anthony Lake, Madeleine Albright, Strobe Talbott, Morton Halperin, Peter Tarnoff, Les Aspin, Dennis Ross, to name but a few, never were outsiders who stormed the ramparts of the U.S. government.[2] Nor did they infiltrate. Rather they came through government's front door from Hotchkiss, Harvard, and Yale, and

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[1]See, for example, Michael Clough, "Grass Roots Policymaking," *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 1994.



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enjoyed the best patronage government can give, under Republican and Democratic administrations alike. Their rise, then, is best understood as a gradual change in the collective mentality of the establishment, a change that is now complete.

Throughout their thirty-year march to the conquest of virtually all positions of prominence, this remarkably like-minded middle-aged group have described themselves at various times as partisans of peace and morality against those insufficiently sensitive to the evils of war; as practical idealists who have outgrown excessive preoccupation with narrow national interests and elusive "victories"; as multi-nationalists, to be distinguished both from isolationists and unilateralists; and as "owls," to be distinguished from doves, and very much in opposition to hawks.

Members of today's foreign policy establishment did not spend their formative years worrying about how to maximize their country's power or studying the principles of international statecraft. After opposing the United States in Vietnam, they made their careers restraining, diminishing, denigrating American power, and arguing that power is not fundamental to world affairs. Their favorite image of the world was that of their forefathers in the Roosevelt administration: partnership between a reformed Soviet Union and an America which had abandoned its Western triumphalism. While they championed arms control agreements, they never got excited when the Soviet Union violated them. With few exceptions, they did not serve in the armed forces, and have scarce social contact and sympathy with those Americans who do. Hence neither in mind nor heart nor habit are they comfortable managing America's power for the sake of its interests, or calling forth the nation's martial instincts to defends its sacred values.

## *Lessons of Vietnam*

WILLIAM APPLEMAN Williams' *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* (1959) contained, in principle, all the complaints expressed by Senator J.W. Fulbright in *The Arrogance of Power* (1967), the primer for Americans who wanted to see America lose in Vietnam. These books taught those who came of age during that war the same lessons: Americans were so cocksure of the superiority of their own way of life, so obsessed with the evil of communism, that they violated the peace and integrity of gentler peoples who were trying to improve their lives in their own way. If the Soviet menace had not existed, America would have invented it, and to a considerable extent that menace *was* our own invention. Americans thought they were saving Vietnam and other places, but instead brought death and corruption. The "other side" were not really communists, but even if they were, they were closer to the people than we, and our violent opposition to them was immoral. America's anticommunism was the original sin of contemporary international life. The evil that others did, from Stalin to Castro to Ho Chi Minh, was in substantial part a reaction to America's criminally stupid anticommunism.

This is the mentality of which John Lewis Gaddis writes:

> "Those of us who work in this field have allowed [William Appleman] Williams' 'tragic perspective' to obscure our vision...Like most orthodoxies, it does not wear well; it distorts our understanding of our place in the world and of ourselves."[3]

Young people interested in foreign affairs

[2]When considering ideas, we must limit ourselves to those who have them. Hence with the exception of Lake, Aspin, and William Perry we do not consider any secretaries of State and Defense, or National Security Advisers, since 1980, but rather focus on people who have set the intellectual tone from slightly below the top.

[3]John Lewis Gaddis, "The Tragedy of Cold War History," *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 1994, p. 153.



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became the counterculture's first recruits. Anthony Lake, Peter Tarnoff, and Les Aspin worked together as junior officers in the U.S. Embassy in Saigon in 1963-64. By the end of the decade they were working "against the war." Lake, together with Morton Halperin, was doing so from within Nixon's NSC. Meanwhile, Dennis Ross was taking part in anti-U.S. demonstrations at UCLA and Strobe Talbott was writing anti-U.S. diatribes (along with pleas for legalizing pot) in the *Yale Daily News*. Just as the Goldwater campaign of 1964 was the defining experience for a generation of conservative leaders, denouncing America over Vietnam and working on the campaigns of Edmund Muskie and George McGovern in 1972 constitutes the crucial experience for today's foreign policy establishment.

By 1977 Lake had written President Jimmy Carter's Notre Dame speech, which blamed the Vietnam War on "our inordinate fear of communism." Vietnam, Lake and Carter said, had been therapeutic: "Through failure we have found our way back to our own values." The "lessons of Vietnam" for these Americans who won while the rest of their country lost were laid out in *The Legacy of Vietnam*, a Council on Foreign Relations book edited by Anthony Lake.[4] Although it is written in the calm style of interagency memoranda, it leaves no doubt who was on whose side. According to Lake, "the interventionist thrust" of American foreign policy after World War II and especially in Vietnam was "couched in terms of the obligation of ideals" (sic) but was "the same" as the European imperialism which had committed abominations and which had been justified as "the white man's burden." Lake said Americans justified their imperialism as "the free man's burden"—putting "freedom" in quotation marks—denigrating it by an implicit comparison to "the white man's burden." Nevertheless, unlike "some of our most intense domestic critics," Lake did not conclude that the "United States is inherently incapable of progressive action abroad..." He is sure that given a shaken conscience and under the right leadership, the U.S. could play a very different role in the world.

The book is full of perceptive analyses of how internal contradictions sped the American defeat. Particularly insightful are Philip Geyelin's account of the self-contradictory messages that the U.S. government put out to the press (tough to scare North Vietnam and bland to reassure everyone else) and Morton Halperin's account of the Johnson and Nixon administrations' attempts to achieve the same self-contradictory effects through military means. But these are not dispassionate technicians eager to lend their expertise to make the U.S. successful. On the contrary, there is no doubt that Lake and his friends meant to push their "soft" line for its own sake, and if its effect was ruinous to the United States in Vietnam, so be it. Why? Halperin explains that the logic of the "hard" line leads to nuclear war. Its success "depends on the willingness of the Soviet leaders to back down...This is not a structure of peace but a structure of threat, with the ever present danger that brinkmanship will lead to a nuclear holocaust."

At least some members of the anti-U.S.-in-Vietnam set, then, believed that by teaching America a bitter lesson in Southeast Asia they saved the world from nuclear war.

This mindset was the issue in the 1993 battle over the confirmation of Morton Halperin to be Assistant Secretary of Defense. His opponents charged that he had been on the other side in the Cold War, while his supporters said that he was a mainstream foreign policy expert. Both sides had a point. Halperin's views on the entire agenda of national security affairs was very much in the mainstream of the new establishment. Strobe Talbott describes him as "on the frontier of clear thinking about nuclear arms policy."[5] The supreme value of this value-free ethic is peace.

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[4]New York, 1976, p. xxi.

[5]Strobe Talbott, *The Master of the Game* (New York: Knopf, 1988), p. xx.



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## *"The Doves Were Right"*

IN THE SAME book on Vietnam, Les Gelb rightly refers to the followers of Henry Wallace as "early doves." Indeed, those for whom good relations with the Soviet Union in the 1940s were of overriding importance are politically indistinguishable from their fellows in subsequent decades, right up to our own times. They have condemned America and its friends more easily than they did transgressions by the Soviets or by those who stood with them.

The doves' arguments were consistent over the decades: the Soviet Union did not pose a threat to the United States; therefore the U.S. should not build this weapon or do that harsh thing, but rather should do what more nearly pleased the Soviet leadership. At the same time, the Soviet Union was so terribly powerful that to risk its ire was to bring the world to the brink of holocaust. Therefore do not build this weapon...etc. For the doves, the ultimate offense was to treat the Soviet Union not as a normal, permanent part of the international scene but as illegitimate, outlaw, and temporary. The mark of wisdom was to seek detente and even entente with the Soviet regime, meaning recognition of each other's legitimate interests, as well as partnership to solve the world's problems in the context of the United Nations Organization.

Over the past generation professors Marshall Shulman, Seweryn Bialer, Steven Cohen *et al.* sought to banish the concept of totalitarianism from academic Sovietology and consequently from the minds of college graduates going into government. But the clearest, loudest expression of the dovish view of the Soviet Union came from Strobe Talbott's books and articles.

In 1981 Ronald Reagan had countered Jimmy Carter's "inordinate fear of Communism" speech by telling the graduates of Notre Dame that the West should dismiss Communism "as some bizarre chapter in human history whose last pages are even now being written." Talbott agreed with "other administration officials, especially professional diplomats and intelligence analysts with long experience in Soviet affairs [who]...expressed confidence that the Soviets recognized such theorizing for what it was: idiosyncratic, extremist, and very much confined to the fringes of government."[6] In 1982 Reagan told the British parliament that "this century is to witness the gradual growth of freedom and democratic ideals...The Soviet Union itself is not immune to this reality." Reagan predicted that people would resist the Soviet system "if necessary by force." Talbott insisted dismissively that "very few in the West took it seriously as a *statement of policy*....There was little follow up in the form of cables from the State Department, Pentagon, or Central Intelligence Agency...."[7]

"The course of events," Talbott wrote with evident satisfaction, showed that Reagan was in never-never land. "The struggle between the Polish regime and Solidarity turned out to be a one-sided contest...Nor was there any sign of the Polish phenomenon spreading to East Germany or the Soviet Union."[8]

Talbott's stock-in-trade was to attack Americans for being nasty to the Soviets. Even after the Soviets had shot down a Korean airliner killing 269 innocent people, Talbott censored Reagan for calling the Soviet Union an outlaw state and the act itself murder. Later, said Talbott, it all "emerged" that "the Soviets believed they were intercepting a military spy plane."[9]

As regards violations of arms control treaties, Talbott sought to have it every way. In his main *Time* article on arms control (18 April, 1983), Talbott chastised Reagan for

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[6]Strobe Talbott, *The Russians and Reagan* (New York: Random House Vintage, 1984), p. 75.

[7]Strobe Talbott and Michael Mandelbaum, *Reagan and Gorbachev* (New York: Random House Vintage, 1987), p. 53 [italics in original].

[8]Ibid.

[9]*The Russians and Reagan*, p. 19.



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removing "negotiability" as a criterion for a good proposal. The U.S. position that the Soviet Union "must build down to a position that the United States would recognize as equality," or face a U.S. buildup, Talbott criticized as "a transparently one-sided set of objectives."[10] Talbott dismissed charges of Soviet cheating: "[The Soviets] have been at least as careful to abide by the letter of the nuclear arms pacts as the U.S."[11] Nevertheless he made clear that the U.S. should not try to push the Soviets around in part because they had stolen a march on us precisely *by* cheating on arms control agreements.

He implied that we had no hope but to get along with the Soviets on such terms as the Soviets might accept: "Reagan's views notwithstanding, there is little reason to hope that the many handicaps of the Soviet economy will be decisively advantageous to the U.S. in the long run, allowing the U.S. to "beat" the USSR in an arms race....The USSR has learned to live without stinting on the priority of guns over butter. And guns may be bazookas, missiles, or space based anti-missile lasers."[12]

In his January 1, 1990 *Time* essay crowning Mikhail Gorbachev "Man of the Decade," Talbott never compared his earlier judgments with reality. He never noted that Soviet spokesmen had confirmed that the Soviet regime fully intended to cheat on arms control, had knowingly shot down the Korean airliner, and that Communist rule had been as evil, odious, and *as fragile* as Ronald Reagan had said it was, and that he had denied. Rather, with exemplary chutzpah he asserted that, "The doves in the great debate of the past 40 years were right all along." The Soviet threat "never was." Beyond self-justification, the point of the essay is familiar: the U.S. must ease up on Moscow's clients abroad, and help the Soviet regime to hold on so that it can continue its reforms and be a partner for progress in the world.

This is also the constant commercial of *At the Highest Levels*, by Talbott and Michael Bechsloss. The book applauds the Soviet policy of the Bush administration in 1990-92, among whose intellectual authors were Dennis Ross and Graham Allison. Despite protestations to the contrary from administration spokesmen, this policy was meant to preserve the Soviet Union, with Mikhail Gorbachev at its head. It was summed up by President Bush when he told the Ukrainian people—19 days before the coup—that their best hopes lay in a reformist Soviet Union. The point here is not that Talbott and his colleagues were mistaken about the USSR, but that a lifetime of thinking this way is intellectually debilitating.

## *Fowl Language*

THOSE WHO share this mentality are no less confused about armaments. If the Soviet Union was not so bad, and America was not so good, then an American arms build-up might do more harm than good. Moreover the invention of nuclear weapons has rendered war an obsolete and hence illegitimate tool of statecraft. These premises have led a whole class of intellectuals to reduce defense policy to arguments about arms control and budgeting.

The bible for this class, *The Absolute Weapon*, was edited by Bernard Brodie, within weeks of Hiroshima. Since then its central point has been restated innumerable times as the acme of sophistication: thenceforward and forever more the United States and the Soviet Union would be able to destroy each other for all practical purposes, and neither could defend itself. Nuclear war would be universal holocaust. The concepts of victory and defeat no longer made sense.

This dogma, along with its priesthood, came to power in 1962 with Secretary of Defense McNamara. His dovish policy called for "assured destruction"—namely putting 400 megaton equivalents on Soviet cities in order to achieve the destruction of 50 percent of the

[10]Ibid., p. 52.

[11]*Time*, April 18, 1983, p. 27.

[12]Ibid, p. 25.



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Soviet population and 25 percent of Soviet industry, while very practically encouraging the Soviets to do the same to the U.S. When confronted with common sense revulsion that partisans of peace should plan genocide, the doves countered that the very existence of nuclear weapons implied this state of things, and that carrying out of the threat of mutual assured destruction was so obviously in no one's interest that we could rest easy—as long as no one doubted our will to act suicidally. Thus the concepts of protection and destruction merged in a cloud of nonsense.

In 1984 Talbott wrote "Nuclear missiles and bombs are symbols of power. The way in which their custodians manipulate these symbols is a key factor in how successful their other policies will be. In that respect, nuclear weapons exist to be talked about, not to be used. Largely for that reason...they exist to be controlled."[13] Moscow's evident preparations, over decades, to fight, survive, and win a nuclear war did not shake the doves' attachment to this dogma. But they did embarrass the doves sufficiently for them to transmogrify themselves into "owls." This perpetuated the influence of the ideas themselves and served to make Graham Allison palatable as an idea man for Reagan's Secretary of Defense, Caspar Weinberger.

In *Hawks, Doves and Owls*, Graham Allison, Albert Carnesale, and Joseph Nye tried to distinguish their wise species of fowl from doves by arguing that owls give greater weight to "non-rational factors." But the new set of feathers does not affect the essentials: denial of the rationality of war; lack of interest in all forms of damage limitation, especially through defense; emphasis on retaliation tempered by ever more arcane procedures, especially cooperative procedures agreed upon between adversaries.

This notion that wise men in lab coats can repeal war's natural resolution in victory and defeat and instead deter or manage conflicts[14] has crippled the American establishment's thinking about conventional war as much as it has about nuclear matters. Anthony Lake's 1985 book *Third World Radical Regimes* acknowledges that diplomacy must be backed by force, but says nothing about the nature of the relationship. Les Aspin's 1987 call for retaliating for Iran's mining of the Persian Gulf[15] was in the best Vietnam style: show them "that we are running out of cheeks to turn"—and complete the policy by offering the carrot, in the form of "a proposal to let Iran achieve what it wants...if it acts responsibly." The new establishment can talk about bombing, sending troops, even showing resolve. But they cannot conceive of any nation, above all the U.S., actually winning wars.

For the new establishment, alliances and diplomacy rather than war and arms are at the center of international affairs. But they are seen not as tools, along with war and arms, but as substitutes for force and indeed as ends in themselves. "Thank God for our European allies" is one of the recurring themes in all of Strobe Talbott's books. He is grateful, however, not for the strengths they provide, but rather that the European governments helped to moderate the Reagan administration's hard line and aversion to the arms control process. America's instincts and politics cannot be trusted; hence the need for alliances. Winston Churchill had noted that Britain and France together in the Thirties did far less in their own interest than either of them would have done alone because each found in the other an excuse for its own inaction. Talbott and his colleagues have erected the Alphonse-Gaston effect of alliances into a positive principle.

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[13] *Deadly Gambits* (New York: Knopf, 1984), p. 5.

[14] See Les Aspin's complaint that regrettably much of the defense budget must be spent for showy forces, such as aircraft carriers, the main usefulness of which is to sustain "credibility," but which would not be used. But if something is not useful in operations, who will believe in it? Jack Kemp and Les Aspin, *How Much Defense is Enough?* (Washington: AEI Press, 1976), pp. 28-29.

[15] *New York Times*, August 27, 1987.



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Sometimes, it seems, we must restrain *our* allies. Soon after Israel's 1981 bombing of Iraq's nuclear reactor, Strobe Talbott published a major essay in *Time* (September 7, 1981) in which he criticized the bombing as a breach of international law and suggested that the U.S. answer it with "selective cutbacks in American military aid." In the same article he called Israel "a nasty, and bitter nation, even a violent one." Not surprisingly, when Iraq invaded Kuwait Talbott muddied both the moral waters and the perception of U.S. interest by arguing that "Yitzhak Shamir's talk of 'greater Israel' is as ominous for the prospects of there ever being real and lasting peace in the region as Saddam's militant nostalgia for Nebuchadnezzar's empire."

What happens when the concept of alliances that are not necessarily meant to serve the national interest merges with the distrust of America's military power? We see the answer in a recent monograph authored by Secretary of Defense William Perry and his assistant, Ashton Carter:

> An international agreement incorporating the concept of cooperative security and accepting the consequent constraint must begin with the central principle that *the only legitimate purpose of national military forces is the defense of national territory or the participation in multinational forces that enforce* UN *sanctions or maintain peace...*
>
> National ground forces would be structured for defense of national territory and their territory-taking capabilities minimized. National capabilities for deep strike at rear and homeland targets inside the territory of others by missile or long range aircraft would be constrained. Some of the ground and air forces that are in excess of national requirements could be configured for use in a multinational military force that could enforce UN sanctions when necessary...[16]

Common sense requires one to ask how one would go about defending the territory of the United States without striking the objects on foreign territory from which attacks against the U.S. were being launched—especially given that the authors are on record as opposing anti-missile defenses. Again, is it better for us to employ ground forces to help overseas allies to take territory or to plan to fight on our own beaches? Then imagine for a moment that the UN had military power at its disposal. Is it even possible to argue that the UN's judgment on the use of such a force would be morally superior to the judgment of the American people's elected representatives? The new establishment have trained their minds not to comprehend such questions.

How does one make national security policy for a country, the grandeur of which one does not have at heart? How does one, even theoretically, chart a path through the world's shoals if all one's life one has deemed weapons evil, the military art noxious, and the very notion of national interest something to be overcome? It is difficult, if not impossible, and so the new establishment will find every excuse not to do it. So, insofar as they prevail, American power will decline and the relative power of other nations will increase. This, in turn, drives the establishment's mentality further towards declinism. There will be increasing pressure to clear the balance between ends and means, between reach and grasp, at a much lower level.

The new establishment wants a kinder, gentler America that gives up the arrogance of its civilization and power while it goes as gently towards its good night as did England. Yet this clearing is unlikely to happen because whereas England's decline was cushioned by the Pax Americana, America's decline will be cushioned by nothing. Sooner than the members of the new establishment expect, they may be in a world harsh enough to lead them to revisit their intellectual roots, asking "Where did we go wrong?" □

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[16] William Perry, Ashton Carter, and John Steinbrunner, *A New Concept of International Security* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1992) [italics added].



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# Servants, Masters, and the Art of Bantering

Richard Grenier

ARISTOTLE, IN HIS *Politics*, mounts a spirited defense of slavery. "For that some should rule, and others be ruled, is a thing not only necessary but expedient, for from the hour of their birth some are marked for subjection, others for rule. " This duality originates "in the constitution of the universe." With qualms regarding only noblemen and free men reduced to slavery after capture in battle, Aristotle insists that the lower sorts of human being "are by nature slaves, and it is better for them as for all inferiors that they should be under the rule of a master." He adds matter-of-factly that, unsuited as they are for political life as well as for the arts of both war and peace, "the use made of slaves and of tame animals is not very different."

A Booker Prize winning novel, *The Remains of the Day*, and now an extremely accomplished motion picture with the same title, have arisen to contest vigorously this, in the modern age, not very fashionable Aristotelian doctrine. Set as are both novel and film in one of the great houses of England in the 1920s and 1930s, with what Hollywood calls the "frame story" taking place in the post-war 1950s, both works focus not on slavery as such, of course, but on the servant class, and above all on that pinnacle of servanthood, the supreme servitor, the perfect English butler. Although a man of considerable skills and intelligence, Mr. Stevens, our butler (played marvelously in the film by Anthony Hopkins), takes great pride in not being his own man, but entirely the man of his employer, Lord Darlington (James Fox). Except for matters of a subsidiary housekeeping nature, Stevens firmly suppresses all his own opinions and thoughts and even feelings, certainly on the great events sweeping over Europe in the period leading up to the Second World War, events in which his employer, Lord Darlington, is in fact actively engaged. For Stevens's sole goal, his raison d'être, on which is based his entire self-esteem, is to be the perfect butler. He firmly suppresses every personal desire and wish to that end. If the employer whom the perfect butler serves is himself a man of great stature, the status of the butler is naturally very largely enhanced, and this thought occasionally crosses Stevens's mind. But he realizes that this is a matter quite beyond his capacity to influence, and indeed that it would be unseemly for him to dwell too much upon it. His duty is to serve and trust his employer, and to have faith in his greatness.

Hitler, Nazi Germany, antisemitism, the occupation of the Rhineland, Munich, "peace in our time"—all of which come marching through the story of *The Remains of the Day*, discussed and debated by the grand guests at Darlington Hall—are not appropriate matters for our butler Stevens to concern himself with. Such matters are Lord Darlington's affair. No lesser figures than Hitler's Foreign Minister

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Joachim von Ribbentrop, Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, Foreign Secretary Lord Halifax, as well as certain associates of the English Fascist leader Sir Oswald Mosley make appearances at Darlington Hall. But Stevens, ever the perfect butler, makes a professional point of not listening to their conversation and only reports snatches of it, concerned as he is with keeping the gentlemen's glasses of port filled and making sure that the small army of footmen under his command are on their toes. Stevens's employer, Lord Darlington, is what was known in Chamberlain's time as an "appeaser," even a Nazi sympathizer and sporadic antisemite. But this is of no concern to Stevens, driven by ambition to become a "great" butler, recognized as such among his professional colleagues throughout the length and breadth of England. The parallels between the total surrender of will of the perfect butler to his employer and the total surrender of will of the Nazis to their *Fuehrer* are left implicit, but I believe they are the intellectual substructure of *The Remains of the Day*.

ANOTHER THEME of *The Remains of the Day*, inevitably entwined with the study of the perfect servitor, is its reflections on the perfect master, on those marked out "in the constitution of the universe" to rule. In 1880, a half century before the story of *The Remains of the Day* begins, members of Britain's landed aristocracy were still the richest, most powerful, and most admired people in the land—perhaps in the world—individually and collectively conscious of their mastery. As Alexis de Tocqueville had realized still a further half century before that, the tide of history had turned decisively and irrevocably against aristocracy, but for a time the British nobility resisted this tide with resourcefulness and tenacity. Because their decline, when it came, was conducted gradually and relatively peacefully, in a socially responsible and public-spirited manner, with timely concessions in the national—and not their class—interest (an "epic of moderation," some have said), many Britons were not fully aware at the time of the inexorable nature of what was taking place.

But while inexorable it was also exquisitely drawn out. At the opening of the last quarter of the nineteenth century, not only the House of Lords but the House of Commons was still utterly dominated by the landowning classes. As late as 1880, when agricultural land was still the country's primary source of wealth, government surveys showed two thirds of the land in the British Isles was owned by under 11,000 people, and in Wales, 61 percent of the land was owned by only 672 people. (One can only wonder if in a shadowy sort of way this might have had some influence on the class perceptions of actor Anthony Hopkins, a Welshman of modest origins.) Throughout the 1880s and 1890s, prime ministers remained invariably landowners and their cabinets overwhelmingly patrician. It was not until the early decades of the twentieth century that the power of the aristocracy began to wane to the point where a real transference of class power took place. Following World War II, concealment was no longer possible and the aristocracy was publicly recognized as being what David Cannadine, in his masterful *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy* (Anchor Books), calls at best an "ornamental" class, many of its leading families engaged in the somewhat humiliating "stately homes" business.

*The Remains of the Day* is consequently not concerned with the decline of merely the English butler, but of the British aristocracy as well. Hovering in the background, moreover, is the decline of Britain as a world power and the extinction of the British Empire. To a far greater extent than was possible in France or Germany—other great European nations once governed by their landed aristocracies—the global expanse of the British Empire had served to disguise and cushion the precipitous dwindling in both wealth and power of Britain's aristocratic class. (It was John Bright who perceptively described the British Empire as "a system of outdoor relief for the English aristocracy.) But now the Empire, too, was gone. David Cannadine remarks on "the



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remarkable coincidence between the decline of the grandees and gentry as the governing class, and the simultaneous eclipse of Britain as a great power."

One of the things that often accompanies decline is a weakening sense of reality. All things considered, *The Remains of the Day* offers a rather kindly portrait of Lord Darlington, if he is to be taken as typical of his class in the 1920s and 1930s, the last period in which British aristocrats might even appear to be the lords of creation. Lord Darlington is lofty, snobbish, ignorant, gullible, foolish. He emerges from the Great War with the feeling that it would not be sportsmanlike to take advantage of the defeated foe. Members of the German aristocracy who had valiantly fought the war were, after all, chaps like himself and it would be downright mean-spirited to humiliate them. As the 1930s advance he wants ardently to avoid engaging in another butchery with them. Lord Darlington is naive, and doesn't have the faintest inkling of what kind of people the Nazis are, but he is not vicious. The actual British aristocracy between the wars, although there was considerable diversity, produced some far less attractive characters. Scions of a decaying social order, sometimes desperate, they all too often fell under the spell of Continental authoritarianism. Even Winston Churchill, in his Romanes lecture at Oxford in 1930, said that Parliament could no longer deal with economic problems and that new structures of executive government were needed.

For many British aristocrats, fascism was merely the recreation in a modern, national setting of the benevolent paternalism of the landed estate of an earlier period. Among British admirers of Mussolini or Hitler or both were the Dukes of Bedford, Manchester, and Northumberland, as well as Lords Londonderry, Lymington, Lothian, Mount Temple, Robert Cecil, Erroll, Strathspey, Tollemache, Ladies Downe and Pearson ... and of course, Sir Oswald Mosley, founder of the British Union of Fascists. Perhaps the best known in America of these marginalized, sometimes embittered aristocrats were the various children of Lord Redesdale, the Mitford family. Diana, second wife of Oswald Mosley, was a regular visitor to Hitler, whom she found "sweet" and "beloved." Her younger sister, Unity, met Hitler over a hundred times and wrote to *Der Stürmer*: "I want everybody to know I am a Jew hater. England for the English! Out with the Jews! Heil Hitler!" Her sister Nancy Mitford, the novelist, said of Unity, "Head of bone and heart of stone," and she herself became both a Socialist and the mistress of one of De Gaulle's ministers. Still another sister, Jessica, married an American Jew and became a Communist (and stubbornly remained one until the distasteful softening of the Soviet Union during the age of Mikhail Gorbachev). Compared to such 1930s British aristocrats, Lord Darlington seems pretty benign.

THE PERSONALITIES who produced *The Remains of the Day*, first the novel and then the movie, are a fetching group. Japanese novelist Kazuo Ishiguro, who writes entirely in English, having lived in England since the age of six, has written two previous novels, one concerning Japanese in England and the other Japanese in Japan. *The Remains of the Day* is his first work on an entirely English subject, and although we might wonder if his knowledge of Japan's formidably stratified class system infuses in some way the present novel, or partly explains his choice of subject matter, he has an impressive knowledge of and feel for the social gradations and niceties of the serving class of Britain's "great houses." In the view of Cyril Dickman, Buckingham Palace's recently retired Palace Steward (i.e. butler), who served no less a person than Queen Elizabeth II and was technical consultant to *The Remains of the Day*, butlers are in simple fact a dying breed, as the country's great houses employing both butler and battalions of highly specialized underbutlers, cooks, gardeners, chauffeurs, footmen, chambermaids, kitchen maids, etc. are themselves a dying institution. The butler of Badminton



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House, one of the great houses in which *The Remains of the Day* was shot, says that today there are properly speaking no more than eighty butlers in the whole country.

The makers of the motion picture are as cosmopolitan as Ishiguro. The team of producer Ismail Merchant (a Muslim from Bombay), director James Ivory (a native-born Californian, once expatriated to India), and novelist and screenwriter Ruth Prawer Jhabvala (a German Jewish refugee in England, later married to an Indian architect) are a fearless and persistent little trio who, operating for decades on the fringes of the commercial movie world and only in the last few years ascending to the realm of big money and major acting stars, have made a real contribution to film history. Most relationships in show business today are ad hoc affairs, even loyal and devoted partners often breaking up not long after the money starts rolling in. But Merchant, Ivory, and Jhabvala have stuck together now for over thirty years.

The traditional Hollywood view that writers are a "necessary evil" is disproven in this case. Despite Merchant's and Ivory's undoubted contribution and talent, the essential reason for the trio's individual style and now its substantial success seems to reside in the gifts of the most retiring member of the group, Ruth Jhabvala. Of Polish Jewish descent, her family had established itself in Germany only to flee the Nazis when Ruth was ten—an experience about which, for reasons she says she herself does not understand, she has written nothing. Grown to adulthood in England, and after taking a degree in English at London University, Ruth Prawer married her Indian architect and was soon off with her husband to India, another highly stratified society. There she had three children and—this odd, shy little bird of a woman—began to write a series of tart, ironic novels and short stories about Indians and India.

Merchant and Ivory, meanwhile, having decided to make English-language films aspiring to world distribution from their base in India, were having a hard time getting started, despite help from India's great director Satyajit Ray. But they introduced themselves to Ruth Jhabvala, whose reputation in India was growing, and she agreed in 1961 to adapt one of her published novels, *The Householder*, for their first film. They've been together ever since. The trio's first international success—if only on the "art movie" circuit—was *The Shakespeare Wallah*, now considered a classic. About a tiny, English family acting company sadly touring the remains of the British Raj performing Shakespeare for Indian schoolboys, it would be hard to think of a more poignant symbol of Britain's decline. The trio's second success, *Autobiography of a Princess*, was once again about the mournful remains of Empire, with an Indian princess, in exile in London, reminiscing about her grand days in India.

The first film of theirs to attract a substantial theatrical audience was an adaptation of Henry James's *The Europeans*, starring Lee Remick, and most of their subsequent achievements have been film adaptations of recognized literary works, particularly those of Henry James and E.M. Forster. The team has stumbled badly only once, in bizarrely turning on its head Henry James' deeply conservative *The Bostonians*, modishly attempting to transform it into a feminist tract, with Vanessa Redgrave shrilly rallying her feminist legions. This failed. But their other films, which include E.M. Forster's posthumous homosexual novel, *Maurice*, and *Mr. and Mrs. Bridge*, starring Paul Newman and Joanne Woodward (this last adapted from the novels of Evan S. Connell), have won literally dozens of major awards in London, Venice, Berlin, New York, and even Hollywood.

The three partners hit the glory road in 1986 with E.M. Forster's *A Room with a View*, (with Maggie Smith and Daniel Day-Lewis), which became a genuine box-office hit, something quite new for the threesome. Partly in consequence of this commercial success, the film was nominated for eight Academy Awards, including Best Picture and Best Director, and won three, including an Award



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for Ruth Jhabvala's screenplay. An adaptation of Forster's *Howard's End* in 1992 did even better, being nominated this time for nine Academy Awards, and again winning three, this time including the Best Actress Award for Emma Thompson and, again, an Award for Ruth Jhabvala's screenplay. A consistent and attractive feature of almost all these Merchant-Ivory-Jhabvala films, whether or not adapted from famous novels, is what can only be called their high literary quality. "Literary" is often a derogatory word in the mouths of film critics, meaning that the movie in question is all in the writing and lacks cinematographic authenticity. But these Merchant-Ivory-Jhabvala collaborations are literary in the sense that, unlike most movies, they almost never stoop to the vulgar conventions of popular fiction. More than once when he was reviewing a trashy popular novel, the great critic Edmund Wilson would say that it was so bad it was like "a movie." If such a remark would have rather less meaning today, it is thanks in part to the works of Ruth Jhabvala, Ismail Merchant, and James Ivory, some of whose films are actually superior to the original novel.

The three partners, having begun their relationship in India, have witnessed at first hand the collapse of both an empire and a ruling social class, and, like Kazuo Ishiguro, have extensive experience in examining cultural and social structures as outsiders: Ivory in India, Merchant in America, and Ruth Jhabvala as almost the perpetual outsider, a Polish Jew in Germany, a German Jew in England, only to become an Englishwoman in India. For good measure, stage director Mike Nichols, co-producer of *The Remains of the Day*, is another German Jew whose family fled Nazi Germany, in his case to America.

THERE IS SOME sense in the remark, made with variations by a number of literary critics, that Kazuo Ishiguro's novel is a tragedy disguised as a comedy of manners, but no sense at all in the assertion that the work is "ambiguous." The story is told by Stevens himself, in a pompous English butler's language that for perhaps half of the book seems pure parody. (He always refers to his corporeal presence as "my person.") The novel's "frame story" begins and ends in the 1950s. Lord Darlington has died and the new master of Darlington Hall is a wealthy American gentleman named Mr. Farraday. The mere falling of a great, aristocratic British home into the hands of a wealthy American is in itself an eloquent symbol of a disappearing social order.

Mr. Farraday, in any event, has a propensity to "banter." This worries Stevens, who, while feeling that, as the perfect butler, he should provide Mr. Farraday with whatever it is he desires, has never before been called upon to banter.

"I would smile in the correct manner whenever I detected the bantering tone in his voice," Stevens says of Mr. Farraday. "Nevertheless, I could never be sure exactly what was required of me on these occasions. Perhaps I was expected to laugh heartily; or indeed, reciprocate with some remark of my own. This last possibility is one that has given me some concern over these months, and is something about which I still feel undecided. For it may well be that in America, it is all part of what is considered good professional service that an employee provide entertaining banter." And the entire first chapter of *The Remains of the Day* is dominated by attempts on Stevens's part to school himself in the art of bantering, which worries him a good deal. "It is all very well, in these changing times, to adapt one's work to take in duties not traditionally within one's realm," he says, "but bantering is of another dimension altogether. For one thing, how would one know for sure that at any given moment a response of the bantering sort is truly what is expected? One need hardly dwell on the catastrophic possibility of uttering a bantering remark only to discover it wholly inappropriate." Stevens looks forward to visits to Darlington Hall of other gentlemen, friends of Mr. Farraday, so that he can ask the opinion of their valet-butlers, the leading members of the profession, on this question of bantering.



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Thus is the foible of the new American master put to brilliant use to illuminate the uncertainties that accompany the dissolution and replacement of a social order.

Stevens is operating Darlington Hall with a greatly reduced staff in the 1950s and receives a letter from an excellent former Darlington Hall housekeeper, a Miss Kenton, who has left her husband somewhere in the West Country and seems to miss the old days. He conceives of the idea of recruiting her to resume her old position. For his recruiting trip to the West Country Mr. Farraday offers Stevens his Ford automobile (in the film a Daimler), and Stevens sets off by road to find Miss Kenton and induce her to return to Darlington Hall. The novel is nominally the record of Stevens's journey: Salisbury, Dorset, Somerset, Devon, Cornwall ... At each stage we are given the details of Stevens's lodgings, his circumscribed social adventures, his motoring (he runs out of first water then "petrol"), as well as a series of Stevens's interior monologues on his profession, and particularly on what constitutes "greatness" in a butler.

We learn much in Stevens's ruminations about greatness. We learn of the Hayes Society of great butlers, forced to close in the 1930s, "many feeling its power had become too great." The most crucial criterion for membership in the Hayes Society was that the applicant "be possessed of a dignity in keeping with his position." Stevens tells us of many long evenings spent by leading members of his profession debating the question of dignity. Was it in-born? Could it be learned? Stevens modestly posits that his own father, a butler before him, and a character in both book and film, was, despite certain imperfections in accomplishing elaborate constructions of English syntax, the true embodiment of dignity. The example he offers is that his father was once called upon to attend a general, an unrefined man and clumsy military leader, responsible for the death of Stevens's older brother, a soldier during the Boer War—killed while carrying out, furthermore, a most "un-British" attack on a civilian Boer settlement. Yet not for one moment did Stevens's father treat this despicable figure with anything but the most exquisite attentiveness and courtesy. For, says Stevens, what is crucial is an ability not to abandon one's professional role. Great butlers "must inhabit their professional role to the utmost." It is at moments such as his father's flawless performance attending the despicable general, says Stevens, that one realizes, as with the English landscape seen at its best, that one is in the presence of greatness.

THE FILM OF *The Remains of the Day*, while retaining the novel's story line, as well as its ultimate meaning and impact, is a substantially different work from the novel. Completely gone is the comedy-of-manners aspect of the latter. Gone as well is the element of parody. The film has no "voice over," so the comically sententious tone of Stevens's language and narrative has disappeared, as have his philosophical investigations into the greatness of butlers. More important perhaps, the film contains no contrast of light and dark, none of the novel's technique of revealing somber, even tragic events through a screen of satire and witty trivialities. Ruth Jhabvala is very talented, but wit is not her strong suit. Henry James and E.M. Forster are far from witless writers but little of their wit remains in her adaptations. The movie version of *The Remains of the Day* is straight drama. The cast is superlative, containing two Academy Award winners: as Stevens, Anthony Hopkins; and as Miss Kenton, Emma Thompson. James Fox plays the lofty, gentlemanly, gullible Lord Darlington, and Christopher Reeves, whose demeanor resembles that of Vice President Al Gore more with every movie, plays a synthesized character, conflating an American senator who visits Darlington Hall in the pre-war years—and who is very critical of these pro-Nazi British aristocrats—and Mr. Farraday, the wealthy American who buys Darlington Hall and becomes Stevens's postwar employer. In the film, Stevens's new American employer does not banter.



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But what the film loses in humor, it gains in dramatic power—though without an extraordinary performance by Hopkins it is hard to see how the movie would have held together. In the novel, "Stevens," after all, is a parody, an artificial character, like P.G. Wodehouse's Jeeves. I don't believe there could have been a butler in modern England capable of effacing his personality and surrendering his being so completely to his employer as Stevens is. His dedication is so total it resembles that of followers of Hamas or Hezbollah surrendering their beings to the will of Allah. With the cameras observing every move, Hopkins must play Stevens as a real person, and what is remarkable about his performance is that one can actually see all the emotions and feelings that he is painfully suppressing. Hopkins somehow makes the butler not only credible but, as the story unfolds, a tragic figure.

The novel is in effect made up of a series of flashbacks, at least one per chapter. The film is much more connected. The conflicts and clashes among Darlington Hall's servants, which in the novel are stylized and satirical, in the film become grim. When Lord Darlington falls under the influence of Sir Oswald Mosley, a fierce antisemite, he dismisses two Jewish housemaids from his service. Miss Kenton objects strongly, but Stevens sees nothing amiss. Later, when Lord Darlington has second thoughts on the matter, deciding that dismissing the girls because they're Jewish was perhaps not sporting, Stevens, speaking to Miss Kenton, claims that he, too, was distressed at the affair—distress of which he'd shown no sign. Stevens had said, in fact, that Lord Darlington had made a study of the Jewish question, and that if Lord Darlington had concluded Jews were bad people and that one must dismiss them from one's service, then one must trust Lord Darlington. Trust was important, one must trust one's employer. This incident is hardly a laughing matter in the novel, but after all it is Stevens who is telling the story, arranging the account so it will not to be too unflattering to himself. Acted out in the film, the scene is horrible, and Stevens—on this and on several other occasions—seems little short of a monster.

At the very end of the novel, in the last half dozen pages, Stevens's world comes unstuck. It has actually been unstuck for some time, but he finally admits it to himself—if only for an instant. There is first the business of Miss Kenton. What is revealed to the reader at the novel's end—the whole tale having been told by Stevens in such a manner as to conceal this, from himself as well as from the reader—is that he has been motoring all the way across England to fetch Miss Kenton for a very simple reason. He loves her. Despite his repeated insistence that all he wants her for is her services as a housekeeper, all for the good of Darlington Hall, he wants her for herself—and for himself. Unable to hide behind the artifice of narrative, once again Hopkins must act this out in front of the camera, and produces a virtuoso creation of the self-deceived man, unaware of his own motives. When he finally finds Miss Kenton at the seaside town of Weymouth, he manages to tell her in his stilted, inflexibly formal way that she seems terribly unhappy. She answers that, although married now and resolved not to leave her husband, she sometimes thinks she might have had a better life, "a life I may have had with you, Mr. Stevens." But, she adds sadly, and with the terrible resignation that is the other side of the impressively phlegmatic British response to adversity "One should realize one has as good as most, perhaps better, and be grateful."

The declaration shocks Stevens, who, his composure shaken for once, suddenly realizes, "my heart was breaking." But he rapidly gets hold of himself. "You're very correct, Mrs. Benn [her married name]. Indeed, I would not be able to rest if I thought such ideas were the cause of unhappiness for you and your husband. We must each of us, as you point out, be grateful for what we do have. And from what you tell me, Mrs. Benn, you have reason to be contented. In fact..." For this is the way Stevens talks.

Yet further scales are to fall from his eyes.



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Stevens has never admitted to himself that by his own standards, which call for a great butler to serve in a "distinguished" house, his whole life has been a failure, because the foolish, gullible Lord Darlington is now considered by the entire British people to have been a traitor to his country, and Stevens feels disgraced and shamed along with him. On the pier at Weymouth, looking out to sea as night falls, Stevens falls into conversation with a stranger, actually a retired butler, and tells him, "Lord Darlington wasn't a bad man. At least he had the privilege of being able to say at the end of his life that he made his own mistakes. He chose a certain path in life, it proved to be a misguided one, but there, he chose it, he can say that at least. As for myself, I cannot even claim that. You see, I trusted. I trusted in his lordship's wisdom. All those years I served him, I trusted I was doing something worthwhile. I can't even say I made my own mistakes. Really—one has to ask oneself—what dignity is there in that?"

So all is ashes. Dignity is what Stevens has craved most, and that, too, he has lost.

But he must make the best of the remains of the day, Stevens says to himself on the last page of the novel. A group of six or seven people on the pier at Weymouth catch his attention. As they laugh merrily he fancies that it is because they have somehow acquired the skill of bantering. He listens to them as they exchange one bantering remark after another, and thinks, "Perhaps it is indeed time I began to look at this whole matter of bantering more enthusiastically. After all, when one thinks about it, it is not such a foolish thing to indulge in, particularly if it is the case that in bantering lies the key to human warmth." The story ends with Stevens resolving to devote himself to developing his bantering skills with more commitment.

The full dialogue of these last scenes is absent from the film. I give the lines here because even without them, in a remarkable acting *tour de force*, Anthony Hopkins has managed to convey their meaning, that and a sense of the most humiliating human failure. There is something indescribably wrong, we're compelled to feel, about a man completely enslaving his spirit to that of another man. *The Remains of the Day*, in both its literary and movie form, tells a highly didactic story. With all the respect due service and loyalty, it is about the humiliation of servitude. □

## *To The Core*

Writing in 1909, Herbert Croly, later to be a founder of *The New Republic*, ruminated on the "exceptional degree of national efficiency" achieved by the British (those were the days!). Croly ventured this explanation:

> The political success of Great Britain has apparently been due, not merely to her adoption of national representation, but to her abhorrence of any more subversive or democratic ideas. On the one hand, the British have organized a political system which is probably more sensitively and completely responsive to a nationalized public opinion than is the political system of the American democracy. On the other hand, this same nationalized political organization is aristocratic to the core—aristocratic without scruple or qualification.

—*The Promise of American Life* (Boston: Northeastern University Press), p. 231-32



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# Charles Beard, Properly Understood

A.J. Bacevich

THE STORY OF how the United States emerged—reluctantly and belatedly—to lead the world has long since acquired the weight of a well-known parable. Like any good parable, this one aims chiefly to admonish, to warn against the recurrence of error, to suppress wayward and irresponsible urgings to which Americans are thought susceptible.

It is a melodrama in two acts turning on the pivot of the Second World War. In Act I, encompassing the period from the founding of the republic until the onset of World War II, internal and hemispheric matters preoccupied the United States. American diplomacy was "immature." Although the United States early on acquired immense wealth and possessed the potential to be a great power, it played a role in world affairs that was fitful, if not capricious. From time to time, rising out of the vagaries of politics, a prophet —most famously Woodrow Wilson—might rouse his countrymen, stirring up their yearnings to save the world and exhorting them to assume responsibilities commensurate with their power and moral pretensions. Yet, although not above flirting with such notions, Americans rejected both prophet and summons and—apart from a pronounced tendency to issue unsolicited moralizing advice—turned their backs on the wider world.

Events of the 1930s changed all that. Faced with the rise of Nazism and Japanese militarism, the American people struggled throughout much of that decade first to ignore and then to insulate themselves from the dual threat. But the enormity of the danger posed by Germany and Japan defeated that effort. Swept into war, Americans were likewise swept to the forefront of world leadership and the curtain dropped on Act I.

Well before that war ended, Americans had internalized an important lesson: never again would the United States hesitate to resist aggression; never again would the United States stand idly by, allowing other nations to drift, quibble, and appease. Yet from the very outset, Act II involved more than the negative aim of resisting aggression. At stake were the prospects for World Peace and the well-being of all humanity, both tied directly to the willingness of the United States to lead. Act II, in short, marked the triumphant rebirth of the ideals that Woodrow Wilson had espoused. In predicting that his Four Freedoms would prevail "everywhere in the world," Franklin Roosevelt in 1941 anticipated and dismissed out of hand the criticism that he was conjuring up a utopian dream. "That is no vision of a distant millennium," he assured

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his listeners. "It is a definite basis for a kind of world attainable in our own time and generation."[1]

Similarly, the Cold War policies of Roosevelt's successors did not aim merely to overcome an adversary. America's true aim was Peace, which in this context meant far more than the absence of war. Peace implied the alleviation of evils that had beset humanity throughout ages past. Moreover Peace was indivisible, a blessing that none truly possessed unless all enjoyed its fruits. Although far from unique in its sentiments, President Harry S Truman's State of the Union Address of January 1947 made the point well. "Our goal is collective security for all mankind," said Truman. "The spirit of the American people can set the course of world history. If we maintain and strengthen our cherished ideals..., then the faith of our citizens in freedom and democracy will be spread over the whole world...." But it was not only a case of political rhetoric. Even NSC 68, the highly classified 1950 blueprint for building up American military power, emphasized that "it was not an adequate objective" for American policy "merely to seek to check the Kremlin design...." Rather, the United States needed "an affirmative program," one that would "light the path of peace and order among nations," leading to the creation of "a system based on freedom and justice."

## *The Good War*

THE ELITES WHO shaped opinion and crafted national policy were none too confident as to the steadfastness of popular support for internationalism. Persuading the American people to don the mantle of World Leadership would require something of a hard sell. Among the resources exploited to make that sell was the record of the past. In particular, the history of World War II and the events preceding it became a weapon. Sustaining popular support for a struggle of indeterminate duration required popular acceptance of World War II—the event that propelled the United States onto the center of the world stage—as very much the "Good War."

Proponents of internationalism were well aware of the fact that Americans had considered their one previous foray to the battlefields of Europe to be a worthy undertaking, but only so long as it remained in progress. Hardly had the Armistice of 1918 taken effect than the so-called Great War became the target of fierce historical revisionism. The result had been to sour a generation of Americans on Wilsonianism. Preventing a recurrence of that catastrophe required that later generations not have comparable second-thoughts about the Second World War.

Facts that did not fit well with the image of the Good War were invariably discounted as irrelevant or insignificant, if not ignored altogether. That Britain was not a frail island democracy but an empire created by conquest and maintained by force; that the Allies had turned a blind eye to the plight of European Jewry until the horror became impossible to ignore; that in aligning themselves with Stalin the Allies made common cause with a tyrant every bit as vile as Hitler and his henchmen; that the "strategic bombing" campaign—culminating in the incineration of Hiroshima and Nagasaki—entailed the wanton slaughter of noncombatants; that the involuntary repatriation after V-E Day of as many as two million Russian POWs back to the Soviet Union consigned them to death or the Gulag: these and other uncomfortable facts—not hidden away in secret archives but known to all who cared to contemplate

[1] "Radio Address Delivered by President Roosevelt from Washington," May 27, 1941 in *Peace and War: United States Foreign Policy, 1931-1941* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1943), p. 611.



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them—never dented the integrity of the story-line that portrayed the war of 1939-1945 as a Manichean struggle fought for the sake of democracy, decency, and respect for human rights.[2] Now, if the revival of internationalism which entry into World War II ignited was *right*, then opposition to internationalism was *wrong*. Thus, one adjunct of efforts to draw the proper "lessons" from World War II was a campaign to discredit those who in the years leading up to the war not only questioned the wisdom of American involvement in Asian and European quarrels but, more fundamentally, presumed to question the very premises of internationalism itself.

During the 1930s, such skeptics had been reviled as "isolationists."[3] According to their detractors, isolationists came in two variants. They were either un-American radicals or ignorant provincials. In the words used by Roosevelt in one of his radio fireside chats, they were "the enemies of democracy in our midst—the Bundists and Fascists and Communists and every other group devoted to bigotry and racial and religious intolerance."[4] Or they were rubes and crackpots, clinging to an outmoded belief that the United States could cut itself off from the rest of the world. By extension, and quite quickly, isolationism became a codeword summarizing the central theme and fundamental defect of *all* American foreign policy prior to 1941. To the heirs of Woodrow Wilson, those who had been oblivious to the spread of evil and indifferent to moral and humanitarian calamity in the 1930s represented everything that was deficient about traditional American diplomacy.

Only by the loosest conceivable definition of the term, however, could "isolation" be said to represent the reality of United States policy during the first century-and-a-half of American independence. A nation that by 1900 had quadrupled its land mass at the expense of other claimants, engaged in multiple wars of conquest, vigorously pursued access to markets in every quarter of the globe, and acquired by force an overseas empire could hardly be said to have been "isolated" in any meaningful sense. As the historian Albert K. Weinberg observed as early as 1940, isolationism "was the coinage, not of advocates of reserve, but of opponents seeking to discredit them by exaggeration."[5]

During and after World War II, the historiography of American diplomacy became a literature of justification, offered on behalf of internationalism. Thus, even after the controversy over American entry into the war was resolved, accounts of the 1930s continued to depict opposition to internationalism as a vestige of the crabbed parochialism and mean-spiritedness that America had now outgrown. While scholars did eventually modify the imagery of oafs and bigots to produce a more nuanced portrait of the isolationists themselves, they left untouched the view that isolationists were people who refused to see the modern world for what it was. If the isolationists of the 1930s came to appear misguided rather than malevolent, the fact that they had

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[2]The most recent effort by a reputable scholar to question the necessity of American intervention in World War II is Bruce M. Russett, *No Clear and Present Danger: A Skeptical View of the United States Entry into World War II* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972).

[3]As characterizations of the actual views of real people, the terms isolationism and isolationist are wildly misleading. Yet given the longstanding convention of thus labeling critics of internationalism, I will use those terms throughout this essay.

[4]"Radio Address Delivered by President Roosevelt from Washington," May 27, 1941, *Peace and War*, p. 670.

[5]Albert K. Weinberg, "The Historical Meaning of the American Doctrine of Isolation," *American Political Science Review*, 34 (June 1940), p. 539.



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been wrong on Hitler sufficed to consign them to continuing disrepute. Even today, the term isolationism retains its unambiguously negative connotation, as the ready resort to the term "neo-isolationism" to discredit those who favor the limiting of commitments in the post-Cold War era testifies. In the hierarchy of American knaves, isolationists still rank on a par with robber barons and segregationists.

To be sure, that adverse reputation is not entirely undeserved. No amount of historical revisionism is likely to revive support for such centerpieces of the isolationist agenda as the Ludlow Amendment (requiring a plebiscite as a prerequisite for declaring war) or the Neutrality Acts of the 1930s (aimed at curbing warmongering by "merchants of death")—proposals crafted with an eye toward preventing a war even then already twenty years in the past. Nor is there any denying that isolationists utterly misjudged Hitler, failing to understand that Nazism constituted a threat that the United States could not ignore. If the Second World War was not a Good War, Hitler made it emphatically a necessary one. Finally, no amount of revisionism can conceal the fact that the isolationist movement contained a dark side, personified by the anti-Semitism and demagoguery of the radio priest Father Charles E. Coughlin. All that having been said, however, by assuming that every facet of isolationist thinking is tainted, Americans have erased from memory the critique of internationalism that formed the essence of isolationism in the 1930s. And that is unfortunate.

Americans today could profit from availing themselves to such a critique. For it becomes increasingly clear that the epic of the United States leading humankind to World Peace bids fair to be a melodrama with no denouement. Act II plays on with no conclusion in sight. Despite the West's historic victory over communism, the peace envisioned by Wilson remains as improbable today as it was in 1918 or 1945; rather than peace, a succession of new crises leads Americans to understand that the burden of fixing the world's problems will remain theirs. Public opinion has responded to this prospect with muted enthusiasm. Yet suggestions that American priorities may lie elsewhere or that American resources might be finite trigger fevered predictions that the United States is about to retreat into isolationism, that it will forfeit its rightful place in the front rank of the world's powers, that Americans will shirk their responsiblities. The unspecified but presumably baleful consequences of such developments have sufficed—thus far, at least—to dissuade Americans from breaking faith with internationalism.

In truth, they hardly know what else to do. Confined by the straitjacket of historical orthodoxy, Americans have lost their capacity to envision a basis for foreign policy other than the billowy promises and large obligations of Wilson and Franklin Roosevelt. It is this inability to envision responsible alternatives to internationalism that ought to lead Americans to give isolationists a second look. Wrong on many things in the 1930s, isolationists were arguably ahead of their time in deciphering the illusions on which internationalism was grounded.

## *Beard's Critique*

WERE AMERICANS willing to look beyond the parody of isolationism, a useful starting point would be the writings of Charles A. Beard (1874-1948). A scholar and publicist of impeccable progressive credentials, Beard was the acknowledged dean of American historians throughout most of the interwar period. Cosmopolitan in outlook, impatient with cant and with historians given to excessive piety, strikingly original in his own interpretations of the past, Beard was about as different from Father Coughlin as anyone could be. He was an astonishingly prolific



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writer. Two works in particular—the massively influential *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution* and *The Rise of American Civilization*—virtually defined the progressive school of history. As such, they provided inspiration for much of what passed for advanced thinking among American political intellectuals during the first three decades of this century: impatience with the status quo, preoccupation with economic self-interest as political motive, advocacy of bold reformist experiments, and certainty that government was the preferred instrument for ameliorating social injustice and inequity. Personally committed to political and economic reform, he was an early and vocal supporter of FDR's New Deal. Yet in the twilight of his long and distinguished career, Beard turned against Roosevelt. Fearing the destructive impact of American involvement in a second world war, Charles Beard aligned himself with the isolationists and became one of the movement's most articulate and insightful critics of internationalism.

As reflected in Beard's extensive writings—as opposed to the writings of those who railed against him—what did isolationists actually stand for? To begin with, he did not call for the United States to cut itself off ostrich-like from the rest of the world. Indeed, isolationists like Beard considered such a course to be neither feasible nor desirable. Summarizing his case for a realistic foreign policy, Beard wrote in 1940 that it "did not seek to make a 'hermit' nation out of America....[I]t never had embraced that impossible conception.... It did not deny the obvious fact that wars in Europe and Asia 'affect' or 'concern' the United States. It did not mean 'indifference' to the sufferings of Europe or China (or India or Ethiopia)."[6] Beard complained (to no avail) that the term "isolationism" was itself a misnomer. If critics intended the term to represent "the creed that America owes nothing to other countries and has no moral responsibilities in the world; that foreign wars are none of our business; that the United States should shrink behind high nationalist walls, let the world go hang, and refuse to cooperate in efforts to maintain peace in the world," then, remarked Beard, isolation was "indeed dead; or rather it never came to life."[7]

Yet if isolationists like Beard would not ignore the world, neither were they optimistic that engagement in the world would remedy the ills afflicting it. Beard rejected outright the assumption—accepted among internationalists as an article of faith—that mankind was advancing, however slowly, toward a harmonious order based on universal ideals, ideals assumed to be indistinguishable from the secular creed of Western political thought. Isolationists like Beard portrayed the global landscape as diverse and turbulent, a world in which change was endemic, arbitrary, and too diffuse to be described as conforming to some unified pattern. Writing in 1935, for example, Beard faulted internationalism for its "exclusion of the national cultures—ideas, loyalties, passions, political traditions, the development and clash of races and nations" that in Beard's view were not likely to disappear anytime soon. Similarly, optimism about the prospects for the spread of democracy "gave too little consideration to the differences in the stages of civilization which existed in Europe and other parts of the world...." To say that democracy was the preferred system of government was not to say that all peoples were equally capable of making democracy work. The reality of the world was simply too complicated "to treat it as something mechanical, on a plane surface, to be maintained *in status quo* or restored if damaged."

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[6]Charles A. Beard, *A Foreign Policy for America.* (New York: Knopf, 1940), pp. 151-152.

[7]Beard, *The Republic: Conversations on Fundamentals* (New York: Viking Press, 1943), p. 310.



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If such a reality implied "a complexity of institutions and occurrences too vast for the human mind to encompass by formulas," argued Beard, then "nothing is to be gained by any false simplification."[8]

Beard did not dispute the fact that modern communications and commercial ties were creating a "universal web" joining nations to one another. Along with many others then and since, Beard had once speculated that such developments might presage an end to war. Events of the early 1930s disabused him of that hope.[9] "Notwithstanding this growing interdependence," he observed in 1934, "the tendency of nations to engage in armed conflict has not disappeared."[10] Indeed, Beard challenged the commonly held expectation that modernization would soften the sharp edges of human affairs, encouraging nations to view as partners or collaborators those whom they had previously seen as rivals. Beard was not persuaded that "the mere adoption and use of the machines and gadgets of modern industrialism" would suffice to transform "the ancient heritages of Europe and Africa and Asia." Nor did he believe that "the common use of machines make men, women, and children of all nations alike in traditions, habits, sentiments, and values...." Thus, Beard rejected the proposition that "the closer nations are drawn together by commerce and intercourse, the more alike they become intellectually, morally, and spiritually"(*The Republic*, p. 316). Material advances alone would not eliminate the roots of conflict.

That the rich and powerful nations standing at the forefront of modernization should profess great interest in maintaining "peace and the possession of all they have gathered up in the way of empire" did not surprise Beard. Yet was it not true, he asked, that the nations possessing wealth and power had achieved their position "by methods not entirely different" from those being employed by the predators of the 1930s? Beard thought it unrealistic to expect that disadvantaged nations would respect calls that they accept the status quo out of sheer regard for the higher claims of world peace. On the contrary, the have-nots would insist upon their fair share. "In the future as in the past," wrote Beard, these demands would raise the prospect of "profound changes in the distribution of populations, resources and imperial possessions...." With this prospect in mind, "the question for the United States" was "whether it wants to be involved in every conflict that arises in this historical movement."[11]

Beard conceded that overriding moral issues could impel the United States to involve itself in situations that it would otherwise avoid. Yet he was not persuaded that the right and wrong of any specific dispute was as straightforward as it was typically portrayed. However obscure or ancient the dispute, competing propagandists bombarded Americans with competing versions of the truth, each one as self-serving and over-simplified as the next. Playing a leading part in this ritual of distortion were those for whom "advocacy of American interventionism and adventurism has become a huge vested interest": the professoriate specializing in the new discipline of international relations, the private groups and associations devoted to fostering interest in foreign affairs, and, above all, "the

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[8]Beard, *The Open Door at Home: A Trial Philosophy of National Interest* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1935), pp. 125-127.

[9]Beard and William Beard, *The American Leviathan: The Republic in the Machine Age* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1930), pp. 701, 749.

[10]Beard, *The Nature of the Social Sciences in Relation to Objectives of Instruction* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1934), p. 153.

[11]Beard, "Collective Security: A Reply to Mr. Browder," *The New Republic*, 93 (February 2, 1938), pp. 357-358.



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daily press and radio, thriving on hourly sensations" while proving abysmally deficient in both attention span and historical perspective.[12]

Beard did not believe that among the various parties contending for advantage in the 1930s any one nation had a lock on either wickedness or virtue. Beard was *not* an apologist for Germany or Japan. Yet he hesitated to characterize the successive European and Asian crises of the 1930s strictly in black-and-white terms. As he observed in 1936, "greed, lust and ambition in Europe and Asia do not seem to be confined to Italy, Germany and Japan; nor does good seem to be monopolized by Great Britain, France and Russia."[13] History seemed to teach that the high ideals for which nations professed to fight had all too often been a facade covering greed and duplicity. The diplomacy of World War I, exposed during the Twenties and Thirties in all its unseemly detail, persuaded Beard and many others that the moral issues of 1917-1918 had been simply a gloss contrived to induce American intervention.

## *"Tilling Our Own Garden"*

CONDITIONING Beard's assessment of how the United States should respond to a world that was complex, conflictive, and morally ambiguous were his very considered views of his own country. They retain considerable resonance today.

Writing at a time when an unprecedented economic crisis gripped the United States, Beard saw American democracy as flawed and fragile, a political system whose own survival was not to be taken for granted. More than a few Americans struggling to cope with the Great Depression and to make sense of such a stunning economic failure agreed with him.

Beard's basic theme, to which he returned again and again, was to urge his countrymen to "concentrate on tilling our own garden," which he described as "a big garden and a good garden, though horribly managed and trampled by our greedy folly"("In Time of Peace Prepare for War," p. 158). Beard thought it absurd that those who questioned the wisdom of involving the United States in foreign quarrels should be indicted for "shirking 'moral responsibility'" or for "displaying a lack of sensibility." America's own imperfections gaped too large to permit such hubris. In Beard's view, "anybody who feels hot with morals and is affected with delicate sensibilities can find enough to do at home, considering the misery of the 10,000,000 unemployed, the tramps, the beggars, the sharecroppers, tenants and field hands right here at our door. It is easy to get into a great moral passion over the distant Chinese. It costs nothing much now," he warned, "though [ultimately] it may cost the blood of countless American boys." ("Collective Security," p. 359).

That Americans would become exercised over the fate of distant Chinese while ignoring oppressed minorities in their own country astonished Beard. Considering "the condition of several million Negroes in the United States," suggested Beard, "those who are deeply move in the virtuous sense implied by 'the White Man's burden' can... find extensive outlets for their moral urges at home..., thus postponing for a considerable time the necessity for acquiring by force additional congeries of 'brown brothers.'"(*The Open Door at Home*, pp. 55-56). Instead of trying to solve the world's problems, Beard summoned Americans to the task of building in the United States a "bona fide civilization" rather than a mere "combination of aggregated wealth, economic distresses, almshouses, work relief

[12]Beard, "Giddy Minds and Foreign Quarrels," *Harper's*, 179 (September 1939), p. 338.

[13]Beard, "In Time of Peace Prepare for War," *The New Republic*, 86 (March 18, 1936), p. 158.



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and public doles." Surely such an undertaking would be preferable to dispatching Americans soldiers to referee "a struggle over the bean crop in Manchuria."[14]

As Beard's reference to creating a bona fide civilization suggests, his critique of the nation's problems included a dimension beyond economic health. In Beard's day as in our own, the fissures dividing Americans along lines of race, class, and culture raised doubts about the very fabric of American society. Lacking "the cement of a long-established monarchy, State Church, or fixed landed aristocracy," the United States needed a "great cohesion among the population and an enlarging capacity for cooperation." That cohesion would necessarily be grounded in certain core values, "common conceptions of rights and wrongs" that in Beard's view, "must be further developed, if American society is to endure."[15]

To Beard, it was self-evident that meddling in far-flung foreign adventures would only undermine efforts to build that cohesion. When meddling led to war, the American polity was likely to sustain severe damage. Experience suggested that the passions provoked by war were less likely to enhance national unity than to exacerbate divisions within American society. All too often, war fed a massive disregard of civil liberties and led to the harassment of scapegoats, the home front hysteria of 1917-1918 and the infamous Red Scare that followed the war being recent examples. Even the relatively mild war scares of the mid-1930s, noted Beard, were sufficient to provoke the introduction of "a whole flock of alien and sedition bills" in Congress, "bills which, by their harsh and sweeping terms, made the old laws of 1798 look pale and harmless."[16]

Beard worried about the militarization of American society produced by endless foreign crusades. Were the nation "to devote immense energies and a large part of its annual wealth production to wars, preparation for wars, and to paying for past wars," he predicted, "then its civilian and cultural interests, like those of Sparta, will become the servants of military purpose and the military mind"(*The Open Door at Home*, p. 241).

There were other dangers as well. Increasingly disenchanted with the rhetoric and actions of Franklin Roosevelt, Beard warned that the supposed imperative of intervening in foreign crises, real or fabricated, could offer an unscrupulous president a pretext for diverting attention from bothersome troubles at home. War, noted Beard, "postpones any domestic crises at hand, and silences the voice of domestic dissent."[17]

In addition, Beard warned that harnessing military power to internationalist ambitions could undermine constitutional checks intended to prevent the abuse of executive authority. By allowing the president routinely to decide on whether and how to employ the military, Congress effectively forfeited its warmaking powers. By 1940, Roosevelt's at times disingenuous efforts to aid Great Britain had persuaded Beard that this had effectively occurred. "Our fate," he wrote, "is no longer in the hands of the people or of Congress .... In fact wars are no longer declared. Situations exist or are created. Actions are taken by authorities in a position to act. The people wait for their portion."[18] Thus did Beard foresee what was actually to happen in the cases of the Korean and Vietnam wars.

By attending to its own business, the United States could "command more respect and affection in other countries

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[14]Beard, "Peace Loads the Guns," *Today*, 4 (June 1935), p. 23.

[15]Beard, *The Open Door at Home*, p.202.

[16]Beard, "Preparedness: An American Issue," *Current History*, 42 (May 1935), p. 179.

[17]Beard, "'Going Ahead' With Roosevelt," *Events*, 1 (January 1937), p. 12.

[18]Beard, "War with Japan," *Events*, 8 (November 1940), p. 321.



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than by intermeddling with its neighbors' affairs, whether under the formulas of *Machtpolitik* or those of democracy, beneficence, and world peace"(*The Open Door at Home*, p. 300). In other words, Beard expressed the belief—the hope, really—that by tending first to its own affairs the United States might come closer to achieving its self-imposed mission than it would by forcing itself on a world less malleable and less accommodating than the heirs of Woodrow Wilson let on.

## *Realism and Restraint*

ACUTELY SENSITIVE to problems at home that had eluded solution, isolationists like Beard also suggested that the ability of the United States to solve intractable problems away from home might not be as great as internationalists fancied. With Americans hard-pressed to deal with their own economic and social ills, asked Beard, "how can we have the effrontery to assume that we can solve the problems of Asia and Europe, encrusted in the blood-rust of fifty centuries?" ("Collective Security," p. 359). Beard pointed to what he called "the hard fact that the United States either alone or in any coalition, did not possess the power to force peace on Europe and Asia, to assure the establishment of democratic and pacific governments there, or to provide the social and economic underwriting necessary to the perdurance of such governments"(*A Foreign Policy for America*, p. 152). As Beard saw it, internationalists both overestimated American power and underestimated the capabilities of other friendly nations to deal with their own problems.

Viewing America as beset by its own maladies and possessing only a limited capacity to cure those of a nasty, violent world, isolationists like Beard allowed themselves limited room for describing the policies that the United States *should* follow. Of one thing at least Beard was certain: the American propensity for preaching to the rest of the world was unseemly, ineffective, and wrong-headed. Beard pleaded for American officials "to avoid vain and verbose dissertations on the manners and morals of other countries."(*A Foreign Policy for America*, p. 153). He detested Franklin Roosevelt's inclination, as evidenced by his loftier flights of oratory, to become "intoxicated by moral exuberance." ("'Going Ahead' With Roosevelt," p. 12). Such moralizing fueled the "theological assertion" that "American law, order, civilization and flag (force) *are* agencies of God," feeding in turn the notion that "the creed that the United States must do good all around the world."[19]

Moralizing served only to raise impossible expectations about the prospects for peace. Beard mocked what he called "the devil theory of war"—as much a fixture in public discourse of the Thirties as it remains today—according to which, because "the masses of the people are viewed as loving peace," wars and the threats of war are laid at the feet of the dastardly politician, a "strange kind of demon, coming from the nether region and making the people do things they would never think of doing otherwise."[20] Nonsense, said Beard; the people themselves were not to be absolved of responsibility.

Rather than constructing foreign policy around grandiose expectations for peace, isolationists emphasized realism and restraint as the touchstones of sound diplomacy. Those tagged as isolationists, wrote Beard, "do not propose to withdraw from the world, but they propose to deal with the world as it is not as romantic propagan-

[19]Beard, The Open Door at Home, p. 47; Beard, "Dr. Beard's Rejoinder," *Events*, 2 (September 1937), p. 164.

[20]Beard, "Peace for America: The Devil Theory of History and War," *New Republic* (March 4,1936), p. 101.



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dists picture it"("Giddy Minds and Foreign Quarrels," p. 351).

To avoid over-reaching itself, a nation should define its own interests with clarity, concentrating its resources on matters vital to its own well-being. "Instead of wasting its energies and talents in vain efforts to impose its culture on other races," wrote Beard, a prudent nation "channels and concentrates them on the building of its own civilization...."(*The Open Door at Home*, p. 301). Beard's emphasis on the role of national interest in formulating policy was not a device to justify radical, head-in-the-sand isolation. He endorsed "collaboration" where the interests of two or more nations coincided—so long as collaboration did "not make world-wide claims"(*The Open Door at Home*, p. 301). Objectives should not outstrip available power. Although a Beardian foreign policy would not be passive, it would be informed by an awareness of the risks inherent in overcommitment. "The very essence of statecraft," according to Beard, lay in maintaining "a sense for the limitations of power and for the consequences that may follow from the exercise of power...."[21]

From more than one point of view, therefore, the avoidance of war itself struck Beard as a worthy objective for American policy—an objective that he viewed as becoming more difficult than in the days when "the American people had not yet been conditioned by propaganda to the idea that the Government must favor one side or the other in every European or Oriental quarrel"("Dr. Beard's Rejoinder," p. 164). A prerequisite for avoiding unnecessary war was to retain freedom of action, allowing the United States to remain neutral in controversies that did not involve clearly discernible American interests. To those who derided the feasibility of remaining neutral in an interdependent world, Beard responded that neutrality was "no more chimerical than belief in the power of our words or our arms to heal the wounds of a mad world."[22]

## *Beard Today*

OTHER THAN THE tepid prospect of America-as-exemplar, did isolationists like Beard have anything positive to offer? To listen to their detractors one would hardly think so. In the words of one distinguished historian, their views were "devoid of political, economic, or social content."[23] Yet, isolationists like Beard did not simply take internationalists to task for their excesses; they prescribed alternatives. Beard advocated a policy of "Continentalism," best understood as a proposal to transform the Monroe Doctrine from a bulwark against intrusion into a system of self-contained development. Granted, whatever merit it may have once possessed, events have long since rendered Continentalism obsolete. This is to be expected: as a model for American diplomacy in the 1990s, Wilson's Fourteen Points or FDR's Four Policemen look equally stale.

The broader issue is one of principles and assumptions. Do the Wilsonian underpinnings of American diplomacy retain their cogency? Despite a great to-do about the need to recast United States policy for a rapidly changing world, that question is one that American elites have shunned. As a result, the debate over post-Cold War foreign policy has been largely a sham. The nearly invisible points of disagreement between Bush and Clinton, or between Republicans and Democrats, during the most recent presidential campaign tell the story: although purporting to offer fresh or provocative thinking, pronouncements issued from on high about future American diplomacy only dusted off the international-

[21]Beard, "We're Blundering Into War, "*The American Mercury* (April 1939), p. 398.

[22]Beard, "'Mandatory' Neutrality," *Forum*, 97 (February 1937), p. 89.

[23]Manfred Jonas, *Isolationism in America*, 1935-1941. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1966), p. 274.



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ist parable and gave it a new name. That will continue to be the case so long as American elites condemn as heresy any departure from the faith to which they have subscribed since taking up the sword against Hitler.[24]

It is in this regard that what for the purposes of this article we have argued to call "isolationism" might at last come into its own: in toppling the pedestal that has kept the Wilsonian premise beyond serious scrutiny since World War II. Recent events make it clear that the critique of internationalism devised by Beard and others remains as apt today as when it was first formulated: the Somalian mission, where messianic intentions—remember Bush commending the troops for doing "God's work?"—have given way to would-be saviors being stalked by those whom they were sent to save; the paleo-Wilsonian clamor for intervention in Bosnia where American airpower will presumably untie the knot jerked tight by centuries of animosity; the extraordinary belief that a few billion dollars will forestall the disintegration of Russia—despite the manifest failure of spending on a much larger scale to alleviate disintegration on a lesser (but still disturbing) scale at home; the missile attack on Baghdad devised as much to allow a fumbling commander-in-chief to look momentarily presidential as to serve any discernible military purpose.

One can imagine the sulfurous contempt with which Charles Beard would have greeted such undertakings. One need not imagine—because Beard's writings make the point explicitly—that it is precisely such fecklessness to which internationalism has consistently been prone. Deprived of the discipline of a clearly discernible proximate threat, the United States finds itself today more than ever susceptible to such tendencies. The resultant spasms of missionary activism promise much and cost more but typically yield little. Beard would tell us that when the United States bases its policies on the presumption of superior moral insight, such results are inevitable.

Moreover, with modern-day disciples of Woodrow Wilson finding echoes of the Thirties or Forties in every grim turn of the 1990s, the isolationist critique reminds Americans that while some problems justify extraordinary exertions, most do not. Then is not now. The third-rate dictators of current vintage are not to be confused with Hitler. However odious their policies, countries like Serbia are not to be mistaken for the Third Reich. However welcome the West's triumph in the Cold War, the demise of Soviet totalitarianism does not signify that Lasting Peace is at hand if only we will try a bit harder to grasp it. On the contrary, as Winston Churchill foresaw several decades ago, ending the war of the giants has led not to peace but to an era in which pygmies vie to settle long-simmering grudges.

In these circumstances, a dose of Beardian skepticism would be salutary. It is time to readmit his critique into the canon of permissible opinion. □

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[24]A classic example of this condemnation was the reaction induced by a May 1993 speech made by Undersecretary of State Peter Tarnoff to a room full of journalists. Built around the theme that the changed conditions of the post-Cold War world might lead the United States to consider "setting limits on the amount of American engagement" in sorting out international conflicts, Tarnoff's speech provoked such a panicky reaction that one would have thought he had proposed pulling out of the United Nations. As reported in the *Boston Globe* (May 30, 1993), for example, Tarnoff's speech was "a bombshell," "shocking," even raising "the specter of the Carter administration." So "explosive" were Tarnoff's views that within twenty-four hours both the White House staff and the Secretary of State felt obliged to repudiate them in the most emphatic terms, Warren Christopher hastening to deliver a speech in which he pointedly used some variant of the word "lead" more than twenty times.



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# Islam's Intramural Struggle

Daniel Pipes

MANY WESTERNERS have speculated that a confrontation between Islam and the West is in the offing. For example, Samuel Huntington wrote in a recent, much noted article, that the centuries-old military interaction between these two civilizations "could become more violent" in the future.[1] But a civilization-to-civilization showdown is not truly likely, for the simple reason that Muslims (and probably Westerners) are too diverse to stand as a bloc.

Instead, the cultural fireworks ahead will more likely take place among Muslims themselves—between those eager to accept Western ways and those who reject them. On one side stand those Muslims confident to learn from outsiders, oriented toward democracy and ready to integrate into the world; on the other stand those who are fearful, who seek strong rule, and who hope to withdraw from the world. In a word, it's a battle between secularist and fundamentalist Muslims—to be more precise, a competition between two of the great countries of the Middle East, Turkey and Iran. It's likely to be a long, deep, and difficult fight.

Trouble is, the Turks don't yet realize that they are engaged in this battle.

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## *The Fundamentalist Threat*

ISLAM ACQUIRED a new public role in February 1979, when Ayatollah Khomeini established the Islamic Republic of Iran. Never before had a government come to power so determined to impose its fundamentalist vision (meaning above all an intent to apply the Sacred Law of Islam, the *Shari'a*) in its own domain and to spread it through the Muslim world.

Khomeini and his associates achieved considerable success. By imposing radically new institutions and customs on Iranians, they managed in just fifteen years to alter the basic texture of daily life in Iran. A small but indicative example: the mullahs banned traditional wedding songs, so marriages are now celebrated with chants like "Salute to the martyrs," "Death of the opponents of the supreme jurist," and other slogans.

The mullahs also had a powerful impact outside Iran: their allies already rule in the Sudan, and others may win power in Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Lebanon, Egypt, and Algeria. Further, Tehran has acquired significant influence over developments in Iraq, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, and Bosnia.

How have the Khomeinists achieved so much? Not so much through money—mismanagement and war have left the country poorer than in the shah's time, with a dis-

[1]Samuel Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?" *Foreign Affairs*, Summer 1993, p. 32.



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contented citizenry demanding improvements in its standard of living—as through an extraordinary act of will. This takes two forms. First, the mullahs promote Ayatollah Khomeini's vision of society through an ambitious media campaign in Iran and abroad, in many languages and in many countries, utilizing every avenue from shortwave radio to scholarly books. Their efforts have established Khomeinism as a live option throughout the Muslim world. Second, they intimidate those who offer alternatives to the Khomeinist scheme—secularist Muslims, Western educators in the Middle East, Iranian dissidents in exile—by attacking and killing some of their leaders.

The hush now descending over Muslim intellectual life testifies to the success of this double-pronged offensive. Fundamentalists have nearly destroyed the American University of Beirut. Salman Rushdie has led a fugitive's life for five years, while his publishers in Japan, Italy, and Norway have been injured or killed. Prominent Egyptian secularists have been assaulted. Dozens of secularists in Algeria have been murdered in a systematic campaign of assassination. The silencing of secularist Muslims means that the modernist strain of thought is disappearing in Muslim cultures in favor of obscurantist doctrines. As fundamentalist ideas infiltrate the schools, children no longer have access to a modern outlook. Political leaders are scared, intellectuals keep their mouths shut. Should this trend continue, the Middle East's prospects look bleak. Whether fundamentalists win or lose ultimately depends not on Westerners but on Muslims. As the exiled Iranian journalist Amir Taheri rightly argues, intimidation and terror perpetrated by Muslims has "to be faced and fought, and must eventually be defeated by forces of life in the Muslim world."[2]

## *The Turkish Model*

TURKEY HAS a special place in the fundamentalists' world view, for they correctly see it as their ultimate enemy. In part, this reflects the Republic of Turkey's status as the great success story of the Muslim world. Whether one looks at political stability, economic growth, or cultural achievement, it has no match. Personal freedoms and human rights are greater than anywhere else. (Consider: however unhappy the fate of Kurds in Turkey may be, they flee from Iraq into Turkey, and not the other way around.) One can validly criticize this or that about Turkey, but its twentieth-century development represents the main alternative to the instability, violence, and repression coming out of so many Muslim countries.

In part, too, Turkey threatens fundamentalist Muslims because it has a uniquely well-formulated and widely accepted philosophy of secularism. The Kemalist doctrine of laicism has been tested in elections over four decades and enjoys proven support among the Turkish population. No other Muslim country has anything remotely like it. This becomes very evident when politicians in Egypt, Tunisia, and Algeria crack down on their fundamentalist violence; lacking secularist ideas with which to combat fundamentalists on the level of ideology, they treat visionaries as common criminals. This crude approach invariably alienates substantial elements of the population.

Fundamentalists necessarily feel insecure as long as Turkey remains a secularist society with a democratic government, a free market, civil liberties, and belongs to NATO. The Turkish model threatens to undermine the Khomeinist experiment much as the Western model ultimately undermined the Soviet experiment. For fundamentalism to survive, the mullahs need to have democracy in Turkey extinguished, to have its market restricted, civil liberties curtailed, the *Shari`a* applied, and the country out of NATO—in effect, an Islamic Republic of Turkey.

While not prepared to take Turkey on directly, the Iranians do already engage in a

[2]Amir Taheri, *Holy Terror: Inside the World of Islamic Terrorism* (Bethesda: Adler and Adler 1987), p. 232.



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wide range of actions against Ankara, including both internal sabotage and internal aggression. They engage in terrorist activities on Turkish soil and seek to spread their vision among Turks, terrorizing those who resist their message. They (along with Saudi elements too) actively provide clandestine aid to groups—like the Süleymancıs and Cemalettin Kaplan's Milli Görüş which share their vision of overthrowing the government and replacing it with a Khomeinist order. In January 1993, they assassinated the prominent anti-fundamentalist journalist Uğur Mumcu; a few months later, they burned down a hotel in Sivas where leftist journalists were staying, killing thirty-seven.

If Turkey stands as the greatest challenge to the fundamentalist Muslims in Iran, they in turn pose one of the most formidable threats to Turkey's security. To stave off this threat, Turks need to call on the full range of economic, military, and diplomatic measures. But ideology is probably the most important weapon of all, for (as in the case of the U.S.-Soviet face-off) ultimately the two sides offer rival visions of life. Turks will need to emulate the mullahs and disseminate their own ideas to the Muslim world. They will find a ready audience, including students hungry for alternatives, politicians facing down fundamentalists, and intellectuals in need of moral support.

For Turks, exporting ideas has several implications, few of them welcome. First, it means paying more attention to the Middle East, a troubled region that Turks have happily ignored for decades and are generally reluctant to engage in now.

Second, it means translating works of the Kemalist legacy into Persian and Arabic, toning down their Turkish-oriented quality to render them more suitable to a non-Turkish audience, and adding up-to-date introductions to make them suitable to the 1990s.

Third, it will involve extending the domestic institutions for spreading the laic ideas of Kemalism to the outside world and subsidizing them heavily. Embassies will have to make these materials widely available, either free or at minimal cost. Radios should broadcast them, conferences study them. Other initiatives (sponsoring writers with a Kemalist outlook, establishing film competitions) would further spread their impact.

Last, it will be necessary to accept the sacrifices in both treasury and blood that standing up to the fundamentalists will involve. The fundamentalists observe few rules, so their opponents should be prepared for vicious responses. Turkish reluctance to confront this radical movement is understandable—no one wants to butt heads with fanatics.

Turks seem not yet to realize what the mullahs know: that fundamentalist Islam will rise or fall depending on what Turks do, and that Iran and Turkey are therefore engaged in a mortal combat.

## *The West's Role*

THOUGH THE West has only a limited role in the confrontation between Iran and Turkey, a primarily Muslim drama, it does still have a part to play. The U.S. government should use its moral weight, military might, economic strength, and its diplomacy to encourage the Turks to stand strong. Washington can pressure the European Union to accept Turkey as a full-fledged member, signal Moscow how seriously it takes Ankara's concerns in the Balkans, Caucuses, and Central Asia; coordinate Iraq policy more closely with the Turks; and, of course, let the Turks know, again and again, that we stand by them in their travails with Tehran.

Of course, close involvement with Turkey could make it more vulnerable to fundamentalist accusations that Ankara is an agent of the "Great Satan." That's always something to worry about and bear in mind, but when the Turks turn to us for support, we must not refuse them. Turkey is a model we hope other Muslim countries will emulate. In an era of quasi-isolationism, it will be hard to find much spirit in America for increasing links to Turkey. But the stakes are high and much hinges on the result. □



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# Victory Came Too Easily

Paul Wolfowitz

Rick Atkinson, *Crusade: The Untold Story of the Gulf War* (New York: Houghton-Mifflin, 1993), 560pp., $24.95.

RICK ATKINSON has written an excellent account of the victory of the U.S.-led coalition against Iraq in the Persian Gulf War, a work impressive for both the breadth of its research and for the drama of its narrative. That said, perhaps the most serious problem with the book is its somewhat misleading title.

The title—*Crusade: The Untold Story of the Persian Gulf War*—comes from one of two epigraphic quotes, this one from Karl Shapiro, identified as an "American poet": "Every war is its own excuse...That's why they're all crusades." (The other epigraph, from the Duke of Wellington, contains far more truth: "Nothing except a battle lost can be half so melancholy as a battle won.")

Unless one regards all wars as crusades, it would be hard to find a war in American history that less resembled one. The term crusade more aptly describes some previous American wars, and in particular the two World Wars, which were fought for the objective of total victory and which tend to confirm Tocqueville's assessment that democracies are slow to go to war but difficult to restrain once aroused. The Gulf War, however, was a war fought with almost dispassionate skill by an all-professional military. It was a war which demanded almost nothing from the American civilian population, not even higher taxes. It involved almost none of the massive mobilization of popular sentiment that has characterized a number of American wars and, on the crucial vote, the Gulf War gained only a slim majority of support in the Congress.

Most important, the Persian Gulf War was quintessentially a limited war. As Atkinson correctly points out, "before the war began, Bush had established limited objectives for a limited campaign. Through six weeks of combat he stuck to those goals with fixed determination—a quality Clausewitz held among the highest attributes of a successful commander." Where the United States has fought limited wars in the past, as in Korea, those limitations were imposed on us by military necessity. The Persian Gulf War was perhaps a unique case of the United States limiting its war aims as a deliberate act of self-restraint.

In Atkinson's defense, he introduces the concept of "crusade" to explain something real and quite puzzling: "why...given the [war's] catalogue of accomplishments, did the sweet savor of victory so quickly turn to the taste of ashes?" In Atkinson's view, the principal explanation lies in the contrast between President Bush's carefully limited war aims and his rhetoric, "which encouraged the nation to consider the war a great moral crusade—a struggle of good versus evil, right against wrong. By demonizing Saddam, Bush aroused passions that would remain unsated."

As someone who served closely with Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney during the Gulf War, I am still frequently asked whether the war itself was not the result of a failure of American diplomacy before the invasion of Kuwait, and why the war ended with Saddam Hussein still in power. Rarely am I asked how such a decisive victory was achieved. The very



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fact that the war seemed relatively easy has tended to make people underestimate the achievement. Ironically, if more American lives had been lost in defeating the Iraqi army and liberating Kuwait, there would probably be more widespread appreciation for what those actions accomplished; certainly fewer people would suggest that perhaps we should have gone on to Baghdad. (In fact, the predictions of American losses by several military experts and leading members of Congress were so high that a majority of the Democratic members of both the House and the Senate voted against the war.)

The truth is that the President never succeeded in enlisting the country in a crusade, if indeed that was ever his intent. As Atkinson acknowledges elsewhere, the conviction of President Bush that this was "a wholly righteous conflict: the right war, at the right place, at the right time, and against the right enemy" was "not widely shared by his fellow Americans." Before the war, the doubts of his countrymen arose largely from fear of the terrible costs that would be involved. Yet if it is true that "within a year the war would be widely regarded as inconsequential, even slightly ridiculous," this was in large measure because the victory came too easily.

"Only through the lens of history," as Atkinson writes, "could the significance of the war be seen as clearly as its shortcomings." No doubt contemporary assessments have been distorted by partisan considerations: by the tendency of those who had opposed the war to deprecate its significance and to focus on ancillary issues of pre-war and post-war policy; and by the tendency of President Bush and his supporters to claim too much for a victory that was impressive enough without claiming that it had "transformed a nation at home" or established "a new world order." Atkinson seems confident that the eventual historical judgment will be largely positive, that someday "the tide would change and revisionist sentiment would bring the war into proper perspective," as it has done with the "jaundiced discontent" that was common after other American wars.

When that historical assessment is made, Atkinson's book will make a significant contribution, in part because it captures much of the danger and drama that were obscured by the seeming ease of the victory. Like his earlier book, *The Long Gray Line*, this is a dramatic and fast-paced narrative that captures powerfully the fears of pilots flying through heavy flak over Baghdad, the courage of POWs brutalized in Iraqi prisons, the daring of British and American commandos operating hundreds of miles inside Iraqi lines in search of Scud missile launchers, and the violence and horror of men being killed by the devastating weapons of modern warfare.

By etching so clearly what individual losses were like, Atkinson makes us grateful that there were so few of them. By making clear the dangers and risks faced by individual soldiers, sailors, and pilots, he makes us recognize the bravery required of everyone who went into combat, bravery which is in no way diminished by the miraculously low casualties that were actually suffered. Atkinson provides the perspective necessary to appreciate the moral courage of commanders whose orders sent those men and women into combat, and not least of the commander-in-chief, President Bush. It is this aspect of the President's leadership—his willingness to take large risks and assume personal responsibility for potentially dangerous decisions—that most distinguished his performance in the Persian Gulf crisis. The firm resolve he communicated, much more than the frequency of his contacts with other world leaders, was the key to assembling the successful coalition. That is the most important lesson of the diplomacy of the war.

## *Schwarzkopf's Volcanic Temper*

ATKINSON ALSO provides historians with a wealth of previously unreported detail about the planning and conduct of the war, derived from hundreds of anonymous interviews with participants, including this



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reviewer. While historians will complain, with some justice, that it is difficult to know in the absence of sourcing how much to rely on particular information, without this technique Atkinson could not have obtained access to the wealth of information he reports. I find the account impressively accurate in those parts of which I have first-hand knowledge and am inclined to place confidence in the rest, with the caveat that one always has to try to guess the source of the information and to make allowance for some personal animus, as well as for the fact that no one comes off second best in his own account of events.

The accounts of General Schwarzkopf's monumental temper and petty tyrannies have drawn more attention than perhaps any other aspect of *Crusade*. These traits were widely known among American military officers but were obscured by the adulation surrounding Schwarzkopf after the war. Subsequent revelations, while perfectly plausible, were no doubt motivated to some extent by jealousy on the part of those who felt that Schwarzkopf was getting more glory than he deserved, by resentment from those who had felt the lash of his temper, or by indignation on behalf of the commander of VII Corps, General Frederick Franks, who bore the brunt of some overstated and unfair criticism by Schwarzkopf in his own book. In the end, for all the attention to Schwarzkopf's volcanic and sometimes abusive temper, one is struck by the fact that it had so little real consequence, apart from its demoralizing effect on his immediate staff. For all his frequent threats to fire people, Schwarzkopf apparently never did. Even when he had the opportunity to replace one of his commanders who left during the middle of the war for gall bladder surgery in Germany, Schwarzkopf instead allowed him to return, telling another disappointed commander that "you've got to dance with the girl you brought to the ball."

Curiously for someone whose private temper was notorious, Schwarzkopf distinguished himself above all by his public skill as a soldier-diplomat. In his final assessment of the general, Atkinson provides a balanced perspective on the more colorful incidents that dominate the book. If Schwarzkopf's generalship was "hardly unblemished," the blemishes were not primarily his temper—indeed, he had "generally encouraged initiative and intrepidity among his subordinate commanders" even though he was "stingy" about giving them credit. The blemishes had much more to do with two strategic observations: most of the planning, particularly the air campaign, was the work of others; and in both the planning and the conduct of the campaign Schwarzkopf had "stubbornly resisted turning his attention to the only Iraqi gambit that could have threatened him strategically—the Scud missile attacks against Israel."

Even this last criticism does not loom large in a broader perspective. In Atkinson's words, "the man had risen to the task": unifying the coalition; making sound tactical assessments; committing "no significant error of strategy or tactics;" projecting "an image of strength and resolve;" and bringing home alive "far more of his soldiers than even the most optimistic strategists in Washington had dared hope." Above all, of course, "he had won. Norman Schwarzkopf had earned his due."

## *Coming To Judgment*

THE OVERATTENTION to anecdotes about Schwarzkopf's temper, followed by a trenchant assessment of the general's strengths and weaknesses, parallels Atkinson's treatment of the war itself. Atkinson quotes, not once but several times and in apparent agreement, the statement of an Air Force general that "There's not a damn thing worth dying for in Iraq." Elsewhere, he says that the "central question...at what point was a man's life a legitimate fee for the liberation of Kuwait? [could] never be answered with certainty." Yet by the end of the book Atkinson's own answer is reasonably clear though slightly hedged: "An avaricious despot had been stopped in his tracks, and the barbarity of his occupation avenged"; the decision



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not to march on Baghdad had "spared countless lives and incalculable political complications"; and even though Iraq "might require allied vigilance for years or even decades," this was true regardless of Saddam's fate. Thus, Atkinson closes by concluding that the war was neither "the greatest moral challenge facing America since 1945," as Bush had declared, nor the "pointless exercise in gunboat diplomacy portrayed by his severest critics." Instead, "the truth lay somewhere on the high middle ground awaiting discovery."

Why has the truth been so difficult to discover? Several factors have already been mentioned: the dissatisfaction of democracies with limited wars and their inevitably murky endings; the unexpectedly low casualties which whetted the appetite for a more complete victory; and the partisanship which rendered much of the early post-war debate less than honest. There is, however, a more general difficulty, fundamental in assessing any timely and successful military venture. By and large, wars are not constructive acts: they are better judged by what they prevent than by what they accomplish. But what a war has prevented is impossible ever to know with certainty, and for many observers is never a subject of serious reflection.

The essential achievement of World War II, for example, was not the establishment of democracy in Germany but the reversal of the Nazi conquest of Europe. Precisely because Allied intervention was *not* timely, we saw rather clearly what it was that we were preventing. Had the Western powers intervened earlier, to prevent Hitler's reoccupation of the Rhineland or his conquest of Czechoslovakia, their achievement (we now know) would have been far greater: millions would have been spared the deaths and horrors of the Second World War. But lacking knowledge of the tragedy that had been averted, that argument would not have been available. A timely victory in the Rhineland or in Sudetenland might nevertheless have seemed incomplete, had Hitler himself remained in power in Germany, and unnecessary even if he had been removed.

The point is not once again to compare Saddam Hussein to Hitler, but rather to observe that Iraq's timely defeat in Kuwait stopped him from accomplishing an extremely dangerous ambition. The astonishing size of the Iraqi nuclear weapons program uncovered after the end of the war makes it clear that Saddam was bent on something much larger and more menacing than the conquest of Kuwait. Had he succeeded in the latter, it is almost certain that he would have gone on to control the rest of the Arabian peninsula—either by conquest or intimidation—and would have eventually confronted both Iran and Israel, armed militarily with nuclear weapons and politically with control over the world's economic lifeblood. To have prevented a war of conquest on that scale was the single greatest achievement of the Gulf War, but to appreciate that accomplishment requires some historical imagination.

This is not to say that there were no immediate positive results of the war. In fact, the Gulf War transformed the security structure of the Persian Gulf, a region that is almost certain to remain the source of a large fraction of the world's energy supplies for decades to come. Having demonstrated the ability to protect the states of the Arabian peninsula effectively, the United States and its allies have provided a positive foundation for the security of those states against their much stronger neighbors to the north. This new responsibility also represents an extraordinary opportunity to base the security of this vital region of the world on something safer and more reliable than the unstable balance between Iran and Iraq. Moreover, with the Iraqi threat to Israel removed and with American influence enormously enhanced, negotiations between Israel and the Arabs that could not have been held before have now become astonishingly routine.

As someone who argued for more resolute opposition to Iraqi threats, not only during the crisis that immediately preceded the invasion of Kuwait but for many months before



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that, and who later argued that we could and should do more at the end of the war, I do not want to deny that there is room for debate about both these policies. At the same time, these arguments need to be put in the proper perspective, as Atkinson does very well.

## *Mistakes, Before and After*

WHETHER MORE vigorous action might have deterred the Iraqi invasion is fundamentally unanswerable. I believed at the time that we should have done more, but I honestly doubt that it would have made any difference. In fact, there was far more preparation than is commonly recognized—shifting the whole focus of our defense planning for the Persian Gulf (in late 1989) from the scenario of a Soviet invasion of Iran to the scenario of an Iraqi invasion of the Arabian Peninsula—and this military planning took its place alongside an overall policy aimed at moderating Iraqi behavior. (In fact, it was an integral part of the new, post-Cold War Regional Defense Strategy briefed to the President and General Scowcroft in June, and packaged for a major Presidential address planned for August 2 in Aspen, Colorado.)

These actions *were* noticed by Saddam, and they helped to explain a "paranoia" that Atkinson calls "baffling" in light of what he (incorrectly) labels "Washington's efforts to appease [Saddam]." Nevertheless, we had to be careful throughout (and particularly in the days immediately preceding the Iraqi invasion) not to act in ways that would cause our Arab allies to accuse us of provoking conflict. This concern for the views of Arab moderates, and particularly Egypt's President Mubarak, certainly muted the tone of U.S. actions and warnings at the time, but helped ensure the unqualified and steadfast support of these leaders after the invasion. Moreover, it seems very doubtful that Saddam Hussein, who paid no attention to all the warnings he received prior to Desert Storm, would have paid much attention to stronger American rhetoric in July of 1990. He seemed to have concluded, from observing both the Vietnam War and the U.S. withdrawal from Beirut, that the United States lacked staying power, and he clearly underestimated the ultimate resolve of the Arab moderates. In those circumstances it is doubtful that deterrence could have worked even if it had been demonstrated more strongly. And the ultimate irony, of course, is that had deterrence succeeded, we would now be confronting a much stronger Iraq, with a nuclear weapons capability the size of which we had not imagined.

Thus, with the benefit of historical hindsight, the mistakes that were made before the war did no lasting damage and may even have been unintentionally useful. The same cannot be said of the mistakes made after the war, although it is important to be very clear about what mistakes we are referring to. Nothing could have insured Saddam Hussein's removal from power short of a full-scale occupation of Iraq. Very few participants in the pre-war debate have any standing to suggest that President Bush should have done this, given the widespread opposition even to the more limited objective of liberating Kuwait. MacArthur's disastrous experience in Korea after the stunning victory at Inchon should be warning enough against the assumption that the occupation of Iraq would be as easy as the liberation of Kuwait. Even if easy initially, it is unclear how or when it would have ended.

Atkinson lays out well the reasons for stopping the fighting when we did and it is hard, even in retrospect, to see what would have been gained by still greater destruction of the Iraqi army, much less anything that would have warranted the risk of additional American casualties. But with hindsight it does seem like a mistake to have announced, even before the war was over, that we would not go to Baghdad, or to give Saddam the reassurance of the dignified cease fire ceremony at Safwan. Even at the time it seemed unwise to allow Iraq to fly its helicopters, and all the more so to continue allowing them to do so when it became clear that their main objective was to slaughter Kurds in the North



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and Shi'a in the South. Some U.S. government officials at the time appeared to believe—despite strong urgings to the contrary from the Saudis—that we had less to fear from Saddam Hussein than we would from a Shi'a government in Baghdad. It was clearly a mistake, moreover, as Atkinson suggests, not to have retained a large demilitarized zone in southern Iraq to maintain pressure on Saddam Hussein.

The reasons for these mistakes were complex, and there were widely disparate views within the U.S. government. In part it was a failure to recognize the enormous differences between the Arab Shi'a of southern Iraq and the Shi'a extremists who governed in Tehran. In part it reflected an overemphasis on the goal of preserving the integrity of a unified Iraq—and the corollary mistaken belief that Iraq's unity could be preserved under a regime like Saddam's which in fact simply insured permanent rebellion by the Kurds and Shi'a. And in no small part it reflected a miscalculation by some of our military commanders that a rapid disengagement was essential to preserve the luster of victory, and to avoid getting stuck with postwar objectives that would prevent us from ever disengaging. A more deliberate withdrawal might in fact have prevented the Iraqi behavior that has forced us to maintain significant deployments in both Turkey and the Arabian peninsula and that has resulted in a complicated set of no-fly zones, and other requirements, to be enforced.

Two conceptual misunderstandings, however, were particularly important and they persist, rhetoric aside, in the Clinton administration as well. The first is the failure to appreciate that Saddam Hussein's continuation in power is a problem. It is true that he has been neutered militarily, and there is little reason to be confident that whatever replaces him will be any better. Yet, as demonstrated by the attempted assassination of George Bush, Saddam will remain a threat to all the governments that supported us and particularly to the Arab Gulf states.

In addition, there is no reason to assume that the pressure on Saddam can be sustained indefinitely. There is already great pressure from some coalition partners, greedy for Iraqi contracts, to lift the sanctions; and Saddam can already boast that he has outlasted many of the leaders who opposed him. A resurrected Saddam would be a threat not only to many of the moderate Arab governments but also to the promising but fragile Arab-Israeli peace process. It is a great mistake, therefore, to "depersonalize" our differences with Iraq, as President Clinton promised, or to think—as both administrations have shown signs of doing—that Saddam would stop being a problem if we would just stop talking about him. It would be an equally great mistake to believe that we could quit the Gulf and return to the *status quo ante*, if and when Saddam Hussein is not a factor.

The United States and the entire industrialized world have an enormous stake in the security of the Persian Gulf, not primarily in order to save a few dollars per gallon of gasoline but rather because a hostile regime in control of those resources could wreak untold damage on the world's economy, and could apply that wealth to purposes that would endanger peace globally. Given this permanent stake in the security of the Persian Gulf, the Gulf War provided an opportunity to base security on a foundation of credible commitment by the United States and its coalition partners. Atkinson's book provides a valuable perspective on the conflict which is the starting point of that effort. □

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# Success Story

Alan Walters

David Marsh, *The Most Powerful Bank: Inside Germany's Bundesbank* (New York: Random House, 1994), 400 pp., $25.00.

THE BUNDESBANK is one of the wonders of the *Wirtschaftswunder* that was ushered in by Ludwig Erhard's great reforms of 1948. Before the establishment of the Bundesbank in 1957, the Bank Deutscher Länder, a creation of the allied military government, had emphasized the importance of monetary policy in ensuring price stability. Both banks owe their independence and prestige to two catastrophes. The first was the great hyperinflation of 1920-23. This expropriated the wealth of the German middle classes and paved the way for Hitler; the gutter became the government. The second catastrophe was the hyperinflation of 1945-47—a consequence of the massive deficit financing of World War II. The Reichsmark currency was completely destroyed and the currency reform of 1948 ushered in the deutschemark, the Grail of which the authorities of the Bundesbank are the guardians.

During the early 1870s, the numerous states of Germany had fragmented currencies which were unified by the creation of the Reichsbank in 1876. From its inception the Reichsbank was completely dependent on the government. But as Germany had joined the gold standard, such dependence was not a matter of great concern. One of the central principles of international monetary economics is that if one fixes the exchange rate, then there is little or no scope for an independent monetary policy...a simple lesson that is forgotten more often than learnt. So, although Germany rarely obeyed the implicit rules of the old gold standard (it was a notorious hoarder of gold), the convertibility requirement prevented any inflationary financing until the abrogation of the standard in 1914. Then, at the behest of governments, the Reichsbank, by monetizing the large government deficits, ensured the hyperinflation of 1920-23.

As a result of the advocacy of Montague Norman, the powerful Governor of the Bank of England, and the pressure exerted by the Allies in May 1922, the Reichsbank was made independent of government by the Autonomy Act. The monetary reform of 1923 and the creation of the new stabilizing Rentenmark—"backed by the real estate of the Reich"—paved the way for the establishment of a new currency, the "Reichsmark," which was based on the gold exchange standard. The Reichsbank remained independent of government.

With the accession of Hitler, however, the Reichsbank was soon put in its place. Through one encroachment after another, the independence of the Reichsbank was repudiated. In 1937 it was made subject to the instructions of the Fuhrer, Hitler. In January 1939 six of its eight directors were dismissed when they criticized the excessive borrowing required to finance Hitler's spending plans. Thus Germany was all set for the great inflation that followed World War II.

It is not surprising that the German people developed a dread of inflation. Just as the hyperinflation of 1920-23 was important in projecting Hitler into power and to



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the devastation of war-time defeat, it also caused the complete collapse of the currency and of the economy after World War II. Never again. The independence of the central bank from government became the basis for the forerunner of the Bundesbank, the Bank Deutscher Länder, which was set up to implement the currency reforms of 1948. And with the establishment of the Bundesbank in 1957, a high degree of independence was written in the *Bundesbankgesetz* (charter).

All this is described in considerable accurate detail in David Marsh's book. Alas, he could not resist the temptation to dwell on the Nazi-party membership of some of the distinguished staff and councils of the Bundesbank. Such smear jobs might have been omitted. Yet Marsh is a gifted journalist and his command of events is most impressive. But he does not have the same respect for *ideas* as he does for the nitty-gritty of reportage.

In my view the change in ideas was of great importance in converting a collectivist Nazi state into the liberal market economy of the Federal Republic. The context of these great changes in Germany was the development of ideas behind the *Sozialwissenschaft*—the social market economy. A small band of German intellectuals, led by two great liberal (in the European and literal sense) economists, Walter Eucken and Wilhelm Röpke, bravely opposed the increased socialization and central planning of the Hitler economy and developed the ideas of Ordo-Liberalism (notably in Walter Eucken's book *Grundsätze der Wirtschaftpolitik*, Tubingen, 1952). The primary focus was through *Ordnungspolitik*, the "constituent principles" of a market economy (monetary stabilization, free entry, private property, and above all maintaining competition). But this Ordo-Liberalism was modified by Alfred Muller-Armark (Erhard's state-secretary) and other scholars who felt that, as a subsidiary matter, state intervention was needed in order to ensure a safety-net. They wanted to avoid the alienation of dispossessed and disaffected groups that had provided such a fertilizer for the poseurs and demagogues of fascism and communism. This modified Ordo-liberalism was called the "social market economy." Eucken, above all, emphasized the need for price signals, undistorted by inflation, for the market to work efficiently and thus the requirement of a stable general price level. It seems that Eucken, rather like Milton Friedman in our day, would have preferred to bind the central bank to strict monetary rules. But the preponderant opinion was in favor of the conduct of monetary policy by an independent central bank.

This background of ideas was quite different from the post-Keynesian ethos which dominated the Western clerisy in Britain and the United States. In the academies, free markets were much distrusted. Most Westerners thought that their economies were being outpaced by the USSR and its satellites, and that central planning was much more efficient than capitalism at producing the goods. (For many academics and institutional economists—particularly those who believed Khrushchev's boast that the USSR would overtake the United States before 2000—this proposition remained obvious even until the early 1980s and the imminent collapse of the Soviet Union!) In fact when the Erhard reforms were introduced in 1947, the occupying powers were vehemently opposed to all the liberalizations—and they were supported by much of the German establishment. The occupation authorities told Erhard that their economic advisors were adamantly opposed to the reforms; it is said that Erhard gleefully replied "Yes, so are mine." And virtually all academic economists in Great Britain and the United States condemned them in various degrees, from "ill-advised" by Walter Heller—later Council of Economic Advisors chairman for JFK and the architect of the "new economics"—to "wicked and evil" by



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Lord Balogh, economic advisor to Prime Minister Harold Wilson. Indeed Balogh went on to forecast that an economic miracle would occur in *East* Germany and that West Germany would disintegrate in rapid economic decline. As for monetary policy, the dominant idea of the post-Keynesian thinkers was that it should be completely subservient to the aims of fiscal policy by financing whatever deficits were deemed to be in the interest of promoting full employment. The job of monetary policy, in the words of Lord Kaldor, was to keep "orderly financial markets." Even to this day, prominent professors at Cambridge have urged that there is nothing wrong with inflation at 10 percent, provided it does not vary too much. This is all a far cry from Eucken, Röpke, Erhard, and their ethos.

In the *Wirtschaftswunder* years of the 1950s and 1960s, the Bundesbank provided a stable deutschemark. No big deal, you may think, since the deutschemark was in the Bretton Woods system of currencies that, pegged to the dollar (which was in turn convertible into gold at $34 an ounce), was the main success of international monetary systems for the years while it was formally operating from 1947 to 1971. Thus all the Bundesbank had to do was to pursue interest rate policies that ensured the exchange rate peg remained in place. But this is a distortion of reality. In the 1940s and 1950s the major currencies were all largely inconvertible. International capital movements, which were so disruptive to pegged systems like Bretton Woods, could be largely contained by the regulators, and consequently it was not too difficult to stay on the pegs. Even so, because of expansionist fiscal and monetary policies, Britain, then a major force in international monetary matters, was forced to devalue in 1947 and in 1967. (There were many French and Italian adjustments over this period, but neither the franc nor the lira could approach the importance of sterling.) And, because of the increasing exchange restrictions imposed by Britain from 1964, the demise of Bretton Woods occurred *de facto* long before the sterling devaluation of 1967. Of course the end of Bretton Woods was much hastened by the inflationary policies of the Johnson administration.

Throughout these turmoils the Bundesbank tried to cling to its policy of monetary containment of inflation, and in particular tried not to import it from the United States. Revaluation helped but the capital flows were too large even for the tolerant United States. The vast expansions of monetary growth had their effects in the 1970s. Although lower than any other OECD country, the German inflation rate (1970-79) was 4.9 percent (in terms of consumer prices) and in 1980-91, 2.9 percent. The inflation was rather higher than their preferred target of 2 percent. But relative to other countries this has been a splendid performance.

This achievement has given the Bundesbank enormous prestige and has promoted much emulation, particularly with regard to its "independent" status and its main objective of price stability. Constitutionally, the objective of price stability is pursued subject to the overriding condition that it is expected "to support the economic policy of the government," but only insofar as its functions (that is to support price stability) are not impaired. Bonn cannot issue directives to the Bank. I believe, however, that the extent of the powers of the Bundesbank does not depend primarily on this constitutional independence, but more fundamentally on the widespread respect and support afforded by the electorate. Germans appreciate that the Bundesbank defends their precious deutschemark and woe betide politicians who try to subvert this sacred trust. (I would also add that there are several central banks throughout the world which are nominally subservient to government, and do wield considerable independent power by virtue of public understanding and sup-



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port. An example in this hemisphere is Canada.)

But how is this power of the Most Powerful Bank exerted? Here, unfortunately David Marsh explains little. No one who wants to know how the monetary management of the Bank is actually carried out should bother to read this book. It does not discuss the techniques of monetary management. But he does survey, rather superficially, the "intermediate targets" of monetary policy.

Since 1974 the underlying targeting of monetary growth has been, as Marsh concedes, "monetarist." To this day the Bundesbank announces targets for monetary growth over the coming year. And it is clear that from all the discussions in *Zentralbankrat* (Central Bank Council), where monetary decisions are made, the dominant concern is monetary growth. Occasionally the arguments turn on whether the monetary figures are misleading and should be reinterpreted, a development which Marsh conceives as "pragmatism" and clearly a welcome change from the "foolish" monetarism of Mrs. Thatcher's Medium Term Financial Strategy, where monetary growth rates and borrowing requirements were targeted in 1980 for four years. In his anxiety to dish Mrs. Thatcher—one of the chronic neuroses of the so-called "quality" press—Marsh appears to forget that in the British case the program was to bring inflation down from a peak of 22 percent to 3 or 4 percent, not the Bundesbank's task of reducing inflation from 6 percent to 2 or 3 percent. He also fails to recall that in early 1981 a Thatcher review of policy showed indeed that the broad monetary aggregates were misleadingly high and that in 1981 Mrs. Thatcher decisively eased fiscal policy to offset the inadvertent fierce monetary squeeze. All this "pragmatism" contrasts with Marsh's fabulous (in the literal sense) "orthodoxy." As an alleged "orthodox monetarist," I can find as little to complain of in the Bundesbank's thirty-five year record as in the Thatcher record of 1981-6.

Indeed the countries of the Community found the German record so convincing that they formed the European Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM) in 1979, which essentially meant that they pegged their exchange rates to the deutschemark. They wished to borrow the "credibility" of German monetary policy via the deutschemark peg so that their markets would be convinced of the seriousness of the disinflationary policies of the early 1980s. Among the major countries of Europe, Britain was the only one that did not join this deutschemark club until 1990. The ERM was planned to introduce a "sea of stability" to the nominal exchange rates in Europe. Later it was taken over as the route to the "convergence" of economies, and through the Single European Act and Maastricht treaty, to the economic and monetary union (EMU) of the Community, now dubbed the European Union (EU).

The ERM was the brainchild of politicians, mainly Helmut Schmidt and Valéry Giscard d'Estaing. The motives behind it were mixed, but both leaders were anxious to build a monetary area and currency, the ECU, that would have some counterweight to the dollar. The Bundesbank was adamantly opposed to the ERM. It was concerned about the support that the Bundesbank would have to give to ailing currencies (it negotiated a much more limited line of support), and to the whole idea of the deutschemark as an important reserve currency. Rightly it saw that this would make domestic monetary management in order to achieve price stability more difficult. Although the Bundesbank changed its mind later, their initial reaction was justified by the subsequent history of the ERM. As soon as exchange controls in France and Italy were abolished in 1990, the ERM started to exhibit strains—aided by the fact that the Bundesbank raised interest rates to contend with ballooning monetary growth. Massive capital movements antici-



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pated that the weaker currencies—the lira, peseta, and sterling—would be unable to hold their pegs. This promised a potential fat profit for those who shorted them and an equally fat loss by the Banks of England, Spain, and Italy. By September 1992, the EMS had a welter of devaluations so that it had largely disintegrated...and George Soros pocketed his billion dollars. With the abdication of +/-15 percent bands (the amount of variation allowed between currencies), the ERM had a complete collapse in August 1993. The old ERM had gone for good.

But only a few months before the start of this ignominious disintegration, the countries had signed the Maastricht treaty, the main purpose of which was to achieve the monetary integration of Europe through convergence of the ERM with absolutely fixed exchanged rates and, eventually, the monetary union of Europe with one central bank issuing one currency. This would mean the demise of the existing central banks, including the Bundesbank; at most they would be operating departments of the European Central Bank (ECB). Similarly the Germans would have to swap their beloved deutschemark for ECUs or whatever jazzy name was cooked up for the Eurocurrency. The deutschemark would die.

One would consider it remarkable that the Bundesbank would consent to the destruction of the one great success story of central banking for the dubious mish-mash of a Eurocurrency issued by a tower of babel in the ECB. The answer is, of course, that the Bundesbank is quite convinced that no such thing will ever occur. The obstacle course to EMU is strewn with impossible conditions, and the Bundesbank keeps arguing that there should be absolutely no relaxation to these requirements. Furthermore, the Bundestag will have the final vote on the death of the mark. Only the most naive would consider the ECB and its currency achievable in the foreseeable future.

But there is an alternative, a stealthy alternative, which in my view is most likely. The old ERM was a system of exchange rates pegged *de facto* to the deutschemark. The Maastricht process was to tighten the pegs until they were absolutely *fixed* on the mark—with no band in which to wobble and *no* possibilities of realignment. Then the Bundesbank would be the *de facto* central bank of Europe and the deutschemark would be its currency. This is what was in the late Nicholas Ridley's mind when in 1990 he claimed that the ERM/EMU was "a German racket designed to take over the whole of Europe"—an idea which Marsh dismisses as "infantile."

This would lead to a final irony. One of the powerful motives behind the French promotion of the ERM and EMU is the desire for "*symetrie*," which is defined in the lexicon of French bureaucrats as "French control over German monetary policy." And there is little doubt that, if there were a Eurocurrency and an ECB, it would be dominated by the French and they would realize their ambition. But now it looks as though, if there is to be monetary integration of Europe, it will be the Bundesbank and Germany in control—precisely the opposite of the aims of Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, Jacques Delors, and the great coterie of very able chauvinists in French public life. A delicious irony indeed.

Europe once again enslaved by the Germans? "Infantile?" As the Germans will rightly say, it will be a voluntary enslavement. No country is forced to fix its currency to the mark. And in economic terms it would not be a bad solution, provided the Bundesbank retains its independence and integrity. A big proviso indeed! Would we want to bet Europe's shop on it? □

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*Sir Alan Walters is Vice-Chairman of AIG Trading Group.*



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# A Dubious Partnership

James Sherr

Fred C. Iklé and Sergei A. Karaganov, (co-chairs), *Harmonizing the Evolution of U.S. and Russian Defense Policies* (Joint Project of the Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington, DC and the Council on Foreign and Defense Policy, Moscow, 1993), 43pp.

TO REALISTS, IT has always been axiomatic that one must deal with those who matter, even when they are least congenial. That paradigmatically realist institution, the nineteenth century Concert of Europe, not only treated war as a legitimate institution (to the outrage of its critics), but had an emphatic Great Power bias. That bias was deemed central to the Concert's aim of reconciling interstate conflict with international order. Conservatives like Castlereagh, nationalists like Bismarck and internationalists like Gladstone were all convinced that international order would be torn apart unless the interests of Great Powers were respected and kept in balance.

The Standing Group of this joint U.S.-Russian project—which includes, *inter alia*, a former Supreme Allied Commander Europe, a former U.S. Undersecretary of Defense, a former U.S. Army Chief of Staff and the last Chief of the Soviet General Staff—have brought these classical convictions to bear upon entirely novel circumstances. The novelty lies in the swift collapse of the power that "balanced" the interests of the United States for forty-five years. Though guarded in its manner of saying so, the report shows discomfort at the extent of the collapse of Soviet power, while welcoming the collapse of the ideology that made this power menacing by definition. If post-Communist Russia could be induced to play the part that post-Napoleonic France played after 1815, these contributors would harbor far fewer anxieties about the post-Cold War order than they plainly do.

In Zhirinovsky's New Year, how realistic is it to suggest that Russia could play this part? Why had so many in Russia's "near abroad" concluded, long before the elections of December 1993, that Russia was playing the role of fire rather than fire brigade in their "common strategic space," and doing so with her customary deliberation and guile? Why have so many in the "far abroad" concluded that the Leninist mentality was swept away with Leninist ideology? How likely is it that Great Russian sentiment will prove to be its antidote rather than its surrogate?

Those who have raised these questions should study this report no less carefully than those who have not. They will find analysis and proposals that, in tone and substance, have as much affinity with liberal internationalism as with classical realism. Yet they will also rediscover that Americans and Russians have impeccably "realist" reasons for maintaining a special relationship with one another.

As the authors note at the outset, today, as in the years of the Cold War, "Russia and the United States continue to share the overriding interest in avoiding global nuclear war." To superpowers who have long felt invulnerable to other forms of military threat, this nuclear preoccupation has been intense. Yet to allies, it has often seemed myopic. Throughout the years of East-West confrontation, Europeans dreaded conventional war no less than nuclear war, and had good reason to fear that policies which made



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nuclear war "unthinkable" could make conventional war more thinkable. For the same reasons that West Europeans feared "adversary partnership" in the 1960s, East and Central Europeans might approach a 1990s "strategic partnership" with apprehension.

Serious as these apprehensions might be, many of the report's recommendations about nuclear policy are both beneficial and overdue. Why should the U.S. and Russian navies preserve submarine patrol patterns drawn up in a period of superpower confrontation? Why should countries that no longer contemplate first strikes against one another's territory oppose revision of the ABM Treaty and the development of ground and space-based missile defenses? Why should safety not replace deterrence as the first priority of strategic nuclear policy?

Of course, too fundamental a "reorientation and restructuring" of nuclear forces could pose risks even for the United States. If "interdependence" in intelligence, early warning and missile defense were taken as far as the authors propose, how swiftly could independence be reestablished? If the "hair trigger" alert posture were abandoned, as suggested, what would be the effect of its revival at a time of deteriorating relations? In a future crisis (e.g. over the Baltic states and Poland, or the Caucasus and Turkey) might we not find nuclear alert cycles acquiring the significance that railway timetables acquired in 1914? Where nuclear strategy is concerned, the challenge of escaping the "concepts and material legacy" of the Cold War may be inescapable, but it will be a challenge for all that.

Confronting this challenge will certainly require U.S.-Russian cooperation. But are the authors right to suppose that it requires a "strategic partnership"? The former postulates the existence of limited, if significant, common interests, but is fully consistent with other divergent interests, not to speak of divergent policies, commitments and courses of action. The latter postulates a commonality of interest over most questions of importance. In apparent recognition of this fact, the authors do not confine their discussion of strategic partnership to nuclear questions, although these do predominate. They also call for "progressively closer" efforts over conventional defense, regional policy, peacekeeping, and economic cooperation.

When it comes to many of these issues, too, the analysis is as sober and hard-headed as one can expect editors and rapporteurs to be within the bounds of committee etiquette. No skeptic about Russian policy would dissent from the authors' assertion that Russia's main security problems are "internal rather than external...and not military in nature." Nor should anyone dispute that, "*as seen from Moscow*" it is regional (i.e. external) concerns that are paramount. By pointing out that the "highly unstable" conditions in Central Asia and the Caucasus are bound to be "more than transient," the authors rightly imply that Russian military power is limited and possibly inadequate for many of her purposes and that Western invention, either on the side of Russia or her opponents, would produce very unsatisfactory returns.

Yet in several conspicuous ways, the report departs from the conventions of realist argument. These conventions are fairly clear. Classical realism takes a divided world for granted. It sees divergent histories and cultures as synonymous with divergent values and aims. Its currency is power and interest, its reference points are states and alliances, and its discourse is concrete and political. Realists subscribe to a rigorous means-ends calculus. No realist becomes obsessed with mechanics, and none allows process to divert attention from substance. In every one of these respects, liberal internationalism is the foil to realism. It postulates a common, if latent, moral order in which "misperception" and "misunderstanding" are rife, but incorrigible differences rare. Its currency is morality, reason, and law. Its reference point is the world community. Its discourse is abstract and sociological: wars are caused by "isms" rather than human willfulness; instability "arises," but is hardly ever fostered. Finally, liberal internationalists treat as a general rule what is only true on occasion: that mechanisms,



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structure, and "processes" will mellow conflicts of interest rather than simply reflect them. *Harmonizing the Evolution of U.S. and Russian Defense Policies* bears the imprint of internationalism as much as realism.

For one thing, the business of partnership receives more attention than its benefits. Why, for example, is there so much discussion of security "arrangements" and so little about the interests and obligations that give them meaning? What, indeed, would give meaning to a "security system linking the United States and the other NATO members together with Russia, Japan, Eastern Europe," one that is also envisaged as, in time, embracing China and being "linked with other regional and global arrangements?" For how long would the angels on this pin remain angels? Often the authors seem more interested in identifying areas where joint activity is possible, rather than optimal. Given its record in Yugoslavia, why are the authors so confident that multilateral peace operations would be "one of the more promising areas of U.S.-Russian military cooperation"? Possibly the European architects of the common Western "policy" in Yugoslavia genuinely believe that it is better to have an orchestra playing while Sarajevo burns, than to have a despot fiddling, but theirs is hardly a formula to follow.

However it is the report's characterizations of Russian policy that will arouse the most searching questions. That is hardly surprising, given the fact that the report's Russian contributors are neither mavericks nor critics, but pillars of the Russian (and, in most cases, Soviet) defense and foreign policy establishments. Consensus not only demands equality, but equivalence. Twice we are told that "we need to rid ourselves of habits of thought acquired during the Cold War." Yet American habits, which are emphatically liberal, have not prolonged Cold War thinking. To the contrary, they predisposed Republicans and Democrats alike to conclude that little would divide the United States and Russia once Communist ideology was abandoned.

Russia's traditions are far from liberal, and for geographical reasons alone, no one should expect them to be. While the U.S. State Department described the USSR as a "virtual ally" during the Gulf War, General Lobov, a member of the report's Steering Group, described operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm as a "threat to the homeland." On any number of occasions since, the current Minister of Defense, Army General Pavel Grachev, has made it clear that he views the presence of foreign forces near the former Soviet periphery (irrespective of their purpose) in similar terms. His geopolitical fatalism is starkly amplified in Russia's newly approved military doctrine, which assesses as "considerable" the risk that "outside powers" would use local war in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) as an "excuse" to launch general war against Russia.

The suggestion of equivalence emerges again when the authors identify "stability" as a "common interest." To be sure, they remind us that this interest "is not unlimited," but the critics and victims of Russian policy would view this qualification as beside the point. These critics would assert and could indeed demonstrate that after 1991, as much as before, Russia's aim in peripheral regions has not been stability but influence. In much of the former Soviet Union—Moldova, Abkhazia and Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan—the pattern of Russian interventionism suggests that where influence cannot be achieved through stability, it will be achieved through enfeeblement. It was not Messrs. Rutskoi and Khasbulatov, but the most liberal of Russia's Deputy Foreign Ministers, Shelov-Kovedyayev, who called for Russia to pursue a "divide and influence policy" in her near abroad.[1]

Along similar lines, the report's co-editor, Sergei Karaganov, has called for "integrationalism," backed by "collective pressure" and the "use of force in a legal frame-

[1]Fedor Shelov-Kovedyayev, *Strategy and Tactics of Russian Foreign Policy in the Near Abroad*, December 1992.



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work."[2] More recently, Foreign Minister Kozyrev has spoken of "traditional zones of influence" in ways that seem calculated to blur the distinction between the former Soviet Union and the former Warsaw Pact.

The report's reticence about such subjects is likely to impress its readers in one of two ways. Many Americans will simply conclude that, behind closed doors, the authors agreed to differ over what constitutes "stability" in former Soviet republics and "independence" in East-Central Europe. But many East Europeans may conclude that the Americans accepted Russian arguments with sympathy or indifference. While Americans might conclude that strategic partnership is, for the moment, impossible, Eastern (and many Western) Europeans might conclude that it is all too possible, and that it will be made at their expense.

For the new states on Russia's periphery, this could prove to be so. Although the authors insist that these states should not be reintegrated by force, at no point do they note the degree to which force has already been used to this end, and nowhere do they actually state that the United States has a stake in their independence. By calling these countries "republics," they show little sensitivity to the nuances of sovereignty and subservience that shape Russia's relationship to its neighbors.

Where the former Warsaw Pact states are concerned, however, the authors would parry any charge of equivocation root and branch. They anticipate accusations of establishing a "condominium" and expressly deny them; they deem it "crucial" that partnership reflect a "common interest" in the independence of Eastern and Central Europe. They go so far as to warn that "one possible reaction" to coercion against Ukraine, Belarus, or the Baltic states might be NATO's enlargement. But short of such action, the authors seem determined that no steps be taken in East-Central Europe that might embitter Russia or drive her into isolation.

This is a difficult tightrope to walk. Russia has already staked a claim to influence in the region, and she will have every incentive to protest when our policies risk isolating her. If today the enlargement of NATO risks doing so, tomorrow it might be the training of Eastern Europe's military establishments or the enlargement of the European Union itself. For this reason, few in East-Central Europe will scan the CSIS report for reassuring declarations. Most will mine it to discover how Americans view their allegiances and interests. To them, Russo-centrism with qualifications is scarcely more comforting than Russo-centrism without them.

For substantial numbers of Europeans, the principal triumph of 1989-1991 was not the transformation of the USSR—which many rightly saw as partial—but the emancipation of its victims. The future of the former Warsaw Pact countries is as important to Europe as the future of Russia. If the United States treats Russia's "traditional" interests with sympathy instead of using every opportunity to question them, several risks arise.

The most obvious of these is instability in East-Central Europe. There, as was the case in postwar Europe, independence has to be rebuilt, not merely respected, security must be provided rather than simply presumed, and the psychological battleground will prove decisive. Those who have staked all on integration with the West could be the first to lose out if the West builds a strategic partnership with the country whose influence they most fear and distrust.

No less harmful would be a new crisis of German identity. While the United States can decide (and the United Kingdom pretend) that Eastern Europe has little to do with them, Germany has no such luxury. Already, the growth of imperial sentiment in Russia is affecting Germany in two ways. First, and for the better, it is making many question their commitment to the "deepening," as opposed to the expansion of Europe. Second, and for the worse, it is reawakening ambivalences about

[2]Sergei Karaganov in *Nezavismaya Gazeta*, 18 November 1992.



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their Western and Atlantic allies and forcing them to contemplate a more independent role. Several Germans already fear that this could propel Germany towards a Russo-centric policy of her own. The consequences of such a German estrangement would be global, not regional.

Yet the party most likely to suffer most from a U.S.-Russian strategic partnership is Russia itself. It is neither natural nor beneficial that Russian influence should increase abroad at a time of internal disintegration. To Russians, of course, the paradox is nothing new. By the 1980s, Russia's "best and brightest" were equating superpower status with ruin. Today, they equate it with madness. It is only Western encouragement that gives it the appearance of sanity.

Finally, how will the United States help herself? A U.S.-Russian partnership will, by default, focus largely on yesterday's business: the control of U.S. and Russian armaments. What of tomorrow's business? Who really threatens the United States: Ukraine with her pro-Western policy and ossifying nuclear forces, or North Korea, Libya, and Iraq, who not only have the will to threaten but are acquiring the means to do so? Does an effective anti-proliferation policy depend upon Moscow or upon harsh rebuffs to malefactors, vigorous protection of their neighbors, and vigorous collaboration with the leading powers of the world? Russia may be a global partner, but she is not a global power. Where she does remain a power—on her own periphery—she may not choose to be a partner.

Realism about the limits of Russia's power and the narrowness of her intentions should not obscure the value of cooperation and the necessity of a mature relationship. The Iklé-Karaganov report presents the case for both with logic and conviction. But for Russia's sake as well as our own, sensitivity must be balanced by candor in this relationship and cooperation by containment. □

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# The Culture of War

Ronald H. Spector

John Keegan, *A History of Warfare*. (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1993), 432pp., $ 27.50.

Bruce D. Porter, *War and the Rise of the State* (New York: Free Press, 1993), 350pp., $24.95.

MANY HISTORIANS and social scientists harbor a strong antipathy toward the serious study of war and its influence. Their dislike is based not only on understandable emotional and moral considerations, but also on intellectual ones. The history of wars and warfare as it is taught in most general high school and college history courses appears not only repulsive, but sterile, repetitive and boring. The same countries always seem to be marching their armies across Europe and fighting big, bloody but inconclusive battles—the names to be memorized for the final exam. One war and battle follows another all waged by kings and generals with easily forgettable names over equally arcane and forgettable issues: "the Habsburg-Valois struggle," "the



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Austrian Succession," "the Schleswig-Holstein Question." Even before the era of music videos and computer games, this was the kind of stuff guaranteed to induce terminal boredom in any red-blooded high school or college student.

For those with a serious interest in history there were also more interesting subjects to pursue in the areas of political and intellectual and, more recently, social, cultural, urban and gender history. Left to themselves, military historians—many of them soldiers, or former soldiers, rather than academics—concentrated their efforts on chronicling battles and campaigns, analyzing strategy, tactics and generalships and tracing the development of weapons and their impact on the battlefield. Historians of foreign relations, more numerous and respectable than military historians, but still a somewhat isolated and narrow group, focused their efforts on identifying the causes of war and the subsequent course of peace negotiations. Many historians of both sorts produced important, even distinguished work, but their impact on their academic colleagues and the larger reading public was negligible.

All that began to change with the publication of John Keegan's *The Face of Battle* in 1976. Keegan chose to examine three battles, Agincourt, Waterloo, and the Somme, which had often been described before. Yet by attempting to reconstruct what these battles were like for those who actually fought them, by looking at them from the point of view of the combatants, rather than the generals, the strategists or the chroniclers, he was able to show that the history of war was both more awful and more interesting than had previously been supposed. His work captured a large audience, including many people who had read no military history before, and inspired graduate students and younger academics to apply and expand his methods and techniques and to ask new questions about old subjects such as battles, leadership and the relationships between technology and warfare. As for Keegan, he received the ultimate accolade for an academic: he was invited to contribute to *The New York Review of Books*. Over the next fifteen years he continued to author books which dealt imaginatively with broad and difficult subjects relating to war, generalship, and command and control in *The Mask of Command* (1987) and war at sea in *The Price of Admiralty* (1989). In *A History of Warfare* he addresses an even broader subject, war in human history.

BRUCE O. PORTER'S book is also about war in human history, at least in the period since the Renaissance. Yet his book is very different from Keegan's in scope, style and viewpoint. Porter's book is intended to demonstrate that wars are "more than mere interruptions in history, that they [are] grand causes of change in their own right." As his subtitle suggests, Porter is particularly interested in the ways in which war and military organizations shaped political institutions and practices in Western Europe and the United States. A political scientist, Porter aims to move beyond the usual questions about war which political scientists and diplomatic historians normally pose, that is, "what are the causes of war?" and look instead at the question of "what war causes."

What war causes, Porter argues, is an inexorable growth of powerful centralized government and bureaucracy, often at the expense of individual rights and liberties. However, war can sometimes also have the effect of fostering democratization in cases where governments are compelled to call on the less privileged members of society to bear arms and are frequently obliged to grant them new rights and opportunities in return.

Porter appears to regard all this as an important new discovery, despite earlier work along the same lines by authors ranging from Tocqueville and Max Weber to Theodore Rabb, Charles Tilly, David Kaiser and William McNeil, some of whom are cited in Porter's own copious footnotes. Perhaps he was moved to restate their con-



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clusions by the belief that contemporary Europeans and Americans nonetheless still "resist acknowledging, much less squarely confronting, the pervasive role of war in our history and politics." He believes part of this may be due to ideological bias on the part of both liberals and conservatives. Conservatives admire military values and are sympathetic to the military outlook but refuse to acknowledge that "big government" has often been the direct outgrowth of war and preparations for war. Liberals "likewise cannot accept that the welfare institutions which they regard as hallmarks of human progress could possibly have derived in part from anything so horrendous as war."

Professor Porter is determined to disabuse both liberals and conservatives of such illusions, and he makes an impressive attempt, ranging over five centuries of European and American history, discussing such diverse subjects as public finance in the sixteenth Century Dutch Republic, the relationship between trench warfare and the rise of Fascism, government control of industry in France during World War I, and the impact of World War II on politics and social legislation in Sweden and Switzerland.

Having identified war as "a powerful catalyst of change," Porter has some difficulty in describing the nature of the change. His careful research keeps getting in the way of his social scientist's urge to generalize and categorize. Thus, "large states were better equipped than smaller ones to endure the violence of the Renaissance age"—except when they weren't; as in the case of Spain which "unravelled under the centrifugal stress of large scale violence." Then again, some small states, like the Dutch and the Swiss, didn't do too badly either. Further on we learn about "the democratizing penchant of modern armies" like Cromwell's roundheads and the soldiers of the First French Republic. Except this doesn't seem to apply to Prussia or Russia. War, Porter concludes, often stimulates national unity and political consolidation—except when it doesn't, as in the cases of Italy and Poland.

Although Porter disavows any attempt to "postulate a military dialectic of history," he ends up doing something very close to it, concluding his study with a call to "discard evolutionary and progressive models of change and humbly acknowledge this tragic and fundamental thread in Western Civilization." In his zeal to sustain this line of argument Porter is sometimes driven to questionable extremes. He defines "war," for example, to include not only international conflict and civil war but arms races and international rivalries, as well as all of the phenomenon associated with late nineteenth century imperialism. Even the use of "war" as a metaphor by FDR during the Great Depression qualifies for inclusion by the author, who sees the success of the New Deal as due to Roosevelt's success in "imparting a warlike urgency to the economic crisis." Having defined almost everything in modern political and economic history as somehow war-related, Porter has little difficulty in proving that war is "the fundamental thread in Western Civilization."

PORTER'S BOOK attempts to show how "war made the state and the state made war," in the words of historian Charles Tilly. Keegan rejects this formulation on the first page of his *History of Warfare.* War, he reminds us, "antedates the state, diplomacy and strategy by many millennia."

Until recently most historians and strategists viewed war as conflict between sovereign states or principalities, waged by organized armies who decided the contest by means of battles and military campaigns. Of course there were also civil wars and insurrections, but they were generally viewed as too messy to lend themselves to much theorizing, except in cases such as the United States where they took on many of the characteristics of international wars.

Keegan tells a different story. He invites us to contemplate not only the record of European warfare of the last few hundred



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years, but also "to observe how different war might be in societies where both state and [European style] regiments were alien concepts." Less than 20 percent of *History of Warfare* is devoted to the period from the seventeenth century to the late twentieth, the era to which most military historians devote all their attention. Instead Keegan ranges widely over 4,000 years of history discussing in detail societies from the Assyrians to the Aztecs, from Easter Island to ancient Greece. He also attempts to discern the nature of early combat through an examination of warfare among three contemporary primitive peoples, the Yanomamo of Brazil, the Maring of highland New Guinea and the Maori of New Zealand.

Keegan's point, one made earlier in Martin Van Crevalds's very different book *The Transformation of War*, is that the history of war, as discussed in most textbooks, describes only one type of warfare, that of the European states and the U.S. in the past two or three centuries. It is this type of warfare upon which Jomini, Clausewitz, Mahan and their later disciples and critics based their ideas and treatises, and which military professionals study in their schools and training courses. This kind of war was the monopoly of sovereign states in a society which

> distinguished sharply between the lawful bearer of arms and the rebel, the freebooter and the brigand...It expected that war would take certain narrowly definable forms—siege, pitched battle, skirmish, raid, reconnaissance...It assumed that wars had a beginning and an end. What it made no allowance for at all was war without beginning or end, the endemic warfare of non-state, even pre-state peoples.

In other words, the sort of "war" we have recently witnessed in Lebanon and the former Yugoslavia. There is, as Keegan shows, no normal or natural type of warfare. Nor has war always been a matter of Clausewitz' "continuation of politics by other means," certainly not for the Aztecs, the Mongols or the Yanomamo.

Keegan's view of the relationship between weapons and war is also far different from that of most military historians. The most common approach has been to describe the evolution of warfare primarily in terms of the application of new gadgets to the battlefield; the musket, the bayonet, the breechloader, smokeless powder, the machine gun, et al, and to analyze the ways in which armies and navies adapted or failed to adapt their organization, tactics and strategy to the new weapons. The story of war was thus viewed as a steady, almost linear progression from less to more and more technologically sophisticated armies and armaments.

Adopting a viewpoint similar to that of historians such as Robert L. O'Connell and John Sumida, Keegan sees culture and not technology as the most important influence on military organization and practice. The most striking example, described at length in his book, is the largely successful attempt by the Tokugawa Shoguns, who ruled Japan for more than two centuries, to outlaw the use of firearms, thus preserving the dominance of the Samurai warrior class with their highly stylized warfare based on swordsmanship. Similarly, the Mameluke warriors of the Middle East refused to modify their traditional mounted warfare based on the lance sword and bow, even in the face of enemies armed with muskets and cannons.

The reader should not come away from a reading of Keegan, however, with the belief that dominance of cultural forms, preferences and attitudes is confined to exotic peoples in remote periods of history. In every society military leaders and organizations have not automatically adopted new weapons and equipment as soon as they came out of the workshop or laboratory, but have made *choices* based not solely, or even mainly, on utilitarian considerations, but on past experience, strategic ideas, prejudices, and the desire to preserve a particular style of war-



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fare which may be the basis of an entire political and social system, as in the case of the Samurai and medieval knights of Europe. In recent history the reluctance of the European and American armies to abandon the horse cavalry is an example of the complex interplay of bureaucratic rivalry, military conservatism, technological uncertainty and the desire to preserve a particular "style" of warfare.

Sometimes choices may be based on considerations of what is permissible and impermissible in warfare. This type of thinking is far from confined to the Mamelukes or the Samurai with their disdain for firearms. During the recent Gulf War, for example, American leaders and the media expressed anxiety, indignation and anger at the possibility that the Iraqis might employ chemical weapons against American soldiers, while accepting with little comment the far greater possibility that these same soldiers might be blown to bits by high explosives, burned to death in aircraft or armored vehicles, or killed or maimed by small arms or mines.

What of war in the post-Cold War world? Porter sees several possible scenarios. The growth in the number of democratic states appears to bode well for the future, given the historical reluctance of democracies to wage war on each other. On the other hand, should tensions between industrialized powers somehow increase we may see the rise of the "scientific-warfare state" employing the new sensors, communications, and "smart" weapons of the military-technical revolution in even more destructive and capital-intensive forms of war.

Keegan is optimistic. He sees the "total wars" of the twentieth century not as the norm, but as an aberration resulting from the practice, begun in the era of the French Revolution, of extending the right and obligation of military service to virtually the entire adult male population, while at the same time extending the scope and aims of war to encompass the total overthrow of the enemy. The norm in warfare throughout most of human history, Keegan argues, has not been total but *limited* war; limited by ritual and convention, as in primitive war and the wars of the Aztecs and medieval knights or by "evasion, delay and indirectness" as in the warfare of many tribal and nomadic peoples. More important, it has been limited by reserving fighting to special classes and categories of society, "those bred to it by social position or driven to it by lack of any social position whatever" or to slaves, as in the case of the Mamelukes.

At the close of the twentieth century, Keegan believes that all forms of war may be becoming rarer. Despite the long history of war and its infinite variety as recounted in his book, war may finally "be ceasing to command itself to human beings as desirable or productive, let alone a rational means of reconciling their discontents." This may well be true of the great wars between sovereign states recounted so meticulously in military histories. However, Lebanon, Yugoslavia and Central Asia remind us that the messier, more ill-defined and open ended conflicts "without clear beginning or end" may continue to grow and flourish. □

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# Power and Civilization

Owen Harries

UNTIL VERY RECENTLY, the concepts of "civilization" and "culture" have played a minor role in thinking about international politics. Realism, which has been the dominant theory of international politics for the last fifty years, allows no significant role for civilizational influences—not in its older version which posits a universal and unchanging human nature, nor in its neorealist form in which the structure of the international system is what is considered decisive.

The principal reason why civilizations and the differences between them have not been considered important in the study of international politics is, surely, that until very recently power politics was a Western game. All the leading actors belonged to one civilization, so that the question of the effect of civilizational differences did not arise. The states and societies of other civilizations figured in the script not as participants but as objects. As such they were usually dealt with under the heading of "colonial policy", and were subject to different kinds of theorizing and moralizing. (As John Stuart Mill pronounced in 1859, "To suppose that the same international customs, and the same rules of international morality, can obtain between one civilized nation and another, and between civilized nations and barbarians, is a grave error, and one which no statesman can fall into...")

Japan has been the one obvious exception to this, and during World War II it did inspire the U.S. government to sponsor a study—Ruth Benedict's *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*—attempting to relate Japan's political behavior to its culture. But for the most part, Japan has been dealt with by treating it as an honorary member of the West, one of the Club—something that its diligent efforts to copy and borrow from Western institutions and practices made plausible.

Now all this is changing. As a number of non-Western countries make startling economic progress and improve rapidly their standing in the hierarchy of states, and as it has become evident that decades of suppression under Communist rule has not diminished the vitality (and in some cases the virulence) of local cultures, increasing attention is being payed to civilizational factors. Two of the most interesting manifestations of this so far are Professor Samuel Huntington's essay "The Clash of Civilizations?" (*Foreign Affairs*, Summer 1993), and the debate which is underway concerning the way in which culture, economic growth and political freedom are related in Confucian countries (especially China), and the validity and wisdom of Western (especially American) criticism of and pressure on those countries. The articles by Eric Jones and Irwin

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Stelzer in this issue both bear on that subject, the first directly, the second indirectly.

HUNTINGTON IS concerned to move civilizations and cultures from the periphery of international politics to the very center of the stage. Briefly stated his thesis is this: The fundamental source of conflict in the new post-Cold war world will not be predominantly ideological or economic. The great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural. The clash of civilizations will dominate global politics, and the fault lines between civilizations will be the flash-points and the principle battle-lines of the future.

As to the pattern of conflicts that is likely to emerge among these civilizations, he believes that it will be shaped mainly by challenges mounted by the others against the dominant Western culture, and that the main challenge will come from "the Confucian-Islamic connection"—a connection that currently manifests itself mainly in military terms, in the form of a flow of arms and weapons technology from China to Islamic countries.

As well as being a radical departure from most past thinking about international affairs, Huntington's thesis is also strikingly at odds with most other current attempts to predict the character of the post-Cold War era.These have typically put heavy stress on the allegedly universalistic, integrative, homogenizing and pacific consequences of forces like proliferating democracy, global capitalism, and technological advances, all of which, it is claimed, will reduce the civilizational differences of the past. Indeed, the authors of many of these predictions see emerging a single new global civilization and culture, and with that the obsolescence of war and power politics. They foresee a degree of international harmony and placidity that one of them at least (Fukuyama) fears may be positively boring—boredom, of course, being one of the problems associated with Utopia. (Incidentally, one surely sees in all this the extent to which Western democratic thinking, in the process of combating messianic ideologies during this century, has itself been infected and made more ideological. Mainstream Western democratic theory did not used to promise Utopia.)

In any case, Huntington rejects all that and says virtually the opposite: we are heading towards an increasingly particularistic world of civilizations in which differences will be emphasized, not softened, and which will allow plenty of scope for conflict and violence. Passions will be stronger, since civilizational differences are more basic than ideological ones, less mutable, less easily compromised. Technological and economic forces will not override culture but will be subordinate to them. The fact that the world is shrinking will make for more, not less, friction.

Given the extent to which this thesis goes against prevailing opinion, it is not surprising that some have reacted strongly to it. I had personal and unexpected experience of this early last year, even before Huntington's article was published. In a patriotic spirit, I wrote a preview piece for *The Australian*, Rupert Murdoch's national daily newspaper, pointing out the serious implications of Huntington's thesis for Australians, should it turn out to be true. For one thing, it would mean that, as an isolated fragment of Western civilization, Australia would be situated on what Huntington nominates as the most dangerous fault-line in the world: that between the West and the Confucian-Islamic connection. For another, it would mean that the policy favored by the current Australian government of converting the country from being Western to being "part of Asia" was not only doomed to fail but highly dangerous. It would end up weakening Australia's civilizational ties with its



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traditional and compatible Western friends, while necessarily failing to make it acceptable to the Confucian and Islamic countries to its north.

The article elicited the most violent response of anything that I have ever published, in Australia or anywhere else. Although I was doing little more than reporting the views of a distinguished Harvard professor, I was attacked as a racist, as being involved in a conspiracy (nature unspecified), and as being generally ignorant and out of touch with the region—and this not from members of the general public but from, among others, the foreign editor of the newspaper involved and a recently retired head of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.[1]

Nor was this reaction an isolated one in the West Pacific. In August, shortly after the appearance of the article in *Foreign Affairs*, a very agitated U.S. ambassador reported back to the State Department from Indonesia:

> Sam Huntington's thesis about the "coming clash of civilizations" has caught on in Asia like wildfire. Dealing with the issue is as great a challenge for policy and public diplomacy as any in the post-Cold War era.

His cable went on to report how a recent Asia-Pacific conference had been dominated by the article ("Sam Huntington's ghost lurked in every shadowy corner...") and how a Malaysian minister had received a spontaneous round of applause for asserting that the Huntington "doctrine" (his word) represented the central core of U.S. policy and the prevailing view of Western intellectuals.

NOW IT SHOULD come as no surprise, in my opinion, that the most violent reaction to Huntington's thesis has come from the West Pacific, for, more than anything else, it is the almost incredible economic progress being made by the Confucian countries in that region—and especially in the last decade by China—that gives that thesis most of its credibility.

A China-led group of Confucian countries seems to offer the only credible challenge to the West in the foreseeable future. Despite its wealth, Japan stands alone culturally, has too small a human and territorial base, and lacks the will to assert itself politically. It may be of course that that lack of will is temporary, and many Asians are wary of Japan. Even so, it is difficult to see a country so strategically vulnerable and isolated as a major threat to the West in the sort of civilizational line-up that Huntington envisages.

Islam has the will, but it is deeply divided internally, and, despite its fortuitous control of a good deal of the world's oil, lacks and shows no signs of acquiring the economic base to be a credible challenger. Fanaticism plus weapons could give it terrible destructive power in the near future—but only at the expense of its own certain destruction should it ever use that power.

As for Russia, having failed in its challenge to the West while in its Soviet, superpower pride, I think it is unlikely to launch another challenge now in its weakness. Besides, if Huntington is right about the Confucian-Islamic connection, no country is more vulnerable to it than Russia, which has enormously long common borders with both those civilizations. If civilizational fault-lines are what count, Russia is going to be fully occupied to the East and the South and in no position to

[1]Since that exchange of views, the Australian Prime Minister, Paul Keating, has said that he has been misunderstood on the subject of Australia's becoming part of Asia and shedding its Western cultural character. He may be right, but it is certainly true that many of the opinion-forming elite in Australia were enthusiastic in their misunderstanding.



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project power Westwards. On the contrary, it is going to be looking for Western support.

Of the other civilizations—the Hindu, the Latin American, the African—for a long time yet none of them is going to have the ability to project civilization-threatening power outside its own region.

So it comes back to the Confucian civilization. What, then, is the state of the relationships between it and the West—and, more particularly between the dominant powers in each, China and the United States?

While the economic relationship has been strengthening rapidly, and while there are no immediate strategic or geopolitical strains in the relationship, there is serious political friction between the two countries. It centers almost entirely on the strong American pressure on China to make rapid improvements in its human rights performance and adopt democratic practices.

We know the considerations that have operated on the American side in all this. They include continuing outrage at those television pictures of Tiananmen Square, back in 1989; a powerful belief that, following the collapse of communism, making universal the triumph of liberal democracy should now be the centerpiece of American policy; a sense, after the fall of the Soviet Union, that the tune was America's to call; awareness of the importance of access to the American market for the Chinese; the belief of some American industries that they are subject to unfair competition because of exploitative labor practices in China; and a sincere, moralistic and long-standing concern with human rights.

How does it look from the other, the Confucian, side? The best indication of that comes not from China but from Singapore. In the last year or two, Lee Kuan Yew and some senior Singaporean officials, clearly fearing a serious deterioration in U.S.-China relations that would have adverse effects for Singapore and resenting American attacks on their own human rights record, have made it their business to explain the Chinese case to Westerners and to get Americans to reconsider their approach.

They make a very good job of it, with Lee playing the philosopher-king and staying on the high ground, while a few brilliant young diplomatists go on the attack.[2]

Lee weaves together several arguments:

• Culture, he insists, must be taken seriously. Values are formed out of the history and experience of a people, are absorbed with a mother's milk. They are not learnt from a book and cannot be imposed from without. An act of Congress will not change China.

• Confucians value the group and the community over the individual, and set great importance on order. Order is particularly important for China, with its still recent historical experience of internal chaos and civil war, and given the awesome and unique task of governing over a billion people.

• In the progress of a country, sequence is important. Order is a condition for economic growth and economic growth is a condition for a loosening and mellowing of political control. To attempt to introduce a great deal of individual freedom too soon will risk both order and economic progress.

• What will happen in the coming decades will not be a one-way process, whereby the Confucian countries and the

[2]See for example, Lee Kuan Yew's interview in *New Perspectives Quarterly*, Winter 1992, as well as Kishore Mahbubani, "The West and the Rest," *The National Interest*, Summer 1992; "The Dangers of Decadence," *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 1993; and Bilahari Kausikan, "Asia's Different Standard, *Foreign Policy*," Fall 1993.



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rest of the world simply take instruction from the West and adopt its ways. Those days are over. What will occur will be an interaction between civilizations, in which a Darwinian process of selection will take place, with each culture borrowing from others in terms of what works best and what suits its needs. He points out that Western countries have already successfully borrowed Japanese management practices, with their emphasis on group solidarity, and anticipates that there will be more to such borrowings, given the way Asian economies are outperforming Western ones.

Performance is the test. Asked directly by a Western interviewer, "In principle, do you believe in one standard of human rights and free expression?", Lee immediately answers, "Look, it is not a matter of principle but of practice." This might appear to represent a simple and rather crude pragmatism. But in its context it might also be interpreted as an appreciation of the fundamental point made by Max Weber that, in politics, it is "the ethic of responsibility" rather than "the ethic of absolute ends" that is appropriate. While an individual is free to treat human rights as absolute, to be observed whatever the cost, governments must always weigh consequences and the competing claims of other ends. So once they enter the realm of politics, human rights have to take their place in a hierarchy of interests, including such basic things as national security and the promotion of prosperity. Their place in that hierarchy will vary with circumstances, but no responsible government will ever be able to put them always at the top and treat them as inviolable and over-riding. The cost of implementing and promoting them will always have to be considered.

Lee's answer might also be compared to Edmund Burke's conclusions on how England should govern its colonies, as expressed in his Letter to the Sheriffs of the City of Bristol in 1777:

> [I]t was our duty, in all soberness, to conform our government to the character and circumstances of the several people who composed this mighty and strangely diversified mass. I never was wild enough to conceive that one method would serve for the whole, that the natives of Hindostan and those of Virginia could be ordered in the same manner, or that the Cutchery court and the grand jury of Salem could be regulated on a similar plan. I was persuaded that government was a practical thing made for the happiness of mankind, and not to furnish out a spectacle of uniformity to gratify the schemes of visionary politicians.

As for the counter attack on America, the Singaporeans have no trouble pointing to inconsistency, double standards and opportunism on the part of the United States. To take only a few of the many examples they give:

- When it suited Washington to play the China Card against the Soviet Union in the 1970s it (as well as most American liberals) turned a blind eye on much grosser violations of human rights than occur now. It is only since the end of the Cold War that the U.S. has stepped up its demands.
- While it is unrelenting towards China on the question of human rights, the United States continues to be very gentle towards Saudi Arabia on the same subject.
- Had the United States been as demanding on human rights and democracy towards Taiwan and South Korea in the 1960s as it is now towards China, those countries would never have experienced their economic miracles, and they and the region would be in much worse shape as a result.

But perhaps the most cutting riposte that these Singaporeans make is that the internal condition of the United States itself today—the evident consequence of pressing its own principles to extremes—deprives it of any authority to preach to others, to insist that all must follow its ways.



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Listen to this, from Kishore Mahbubani, a recent Singaporean ambassador to the United Nations and visiting fellow at Harvard:

> But freedom does not only solve problems; it can also cause them. The United States has undertaken a massive social experiment, tearing down social institution after social institution that restrained the individual. The results have been disastrous. Since 1960 the U.S. population has increased 41 percent while violent crime has risen by 560 percent, single-mother births by 419 percent, divorce rates by 300 percent and the percentage of children living in single-parent homes by 300 percent. This is massive social decay. Many a society shudders at the prospects of this happening on its shores. But instead of traveling overseas with humility, Americans confidently preach the virtues of unfettered individual freedom, blithely ignoring the visible social consequences.[3]

How is one to respond to all that? One might I suppose simply say, thank God they didn't bring up Slavery and the Opium Trade, and leave it at that. But in this issue Eric Jones takes the Singaporean case seriously, analyzes its arguments, and then speculates fascinatingly on China's possible futures. As he says, in one sense the debate is one between those who assert the primacy of history and those who assert the primacy of economics. But as Irwin Stelzer shows, there is room for interesting differences of opinion even among those who agree on the latter.

GOING BACK briefly to Huntington, if I were asked to pass an overall opinion on his thesis, I would have to say that I am left not entirely convinced. I think that there is more continuing truth in the realist view about the central importance of international anarchy than he allows for, and that he too readily subordinates the potential for intra-civilizational conflict to that for inter-civilizational ones. It also seems to me that the nature and durability of the Confucian-Islamic connection is under-argued (after all, the West has been the main supplier of arms to Islamic states for many years, but that has not led us to speak of a Western-Islamic civilizational connection). Again, I find him uncharacteristically unclear on the subject of how nation-states fit into the new scheme of things. (At the beginning of his article he asserts that, "Nation states will remain the most powerful actors in world affairs." But two pages later he goes out of his way to remark that, "Westerners tend to think of nation states as the principal actors in global affairs. They have been that, however, for only a few centuries.")

That having been said, I find Huntington's hypothesis to be enormously stimulating, rich in its asides, and suggestive of new connections and distinctions among familiar things.

To give but one example in conclusion, consider this: If civilizational fault lines are indeed to be the battle-lines of the future, is it not interesting and significant that the United States—alone of all the major powers—is far removed from any such dangerous and potentially violent fault-line? What is that going to mean in the next decade or two? That the United States will have a freedom to choose denied to other major powers? That it will be well positioned to act as a balancer when other powers collide? That there will be no compulsion for it to involve itself in fault-line conflicts? Is the latter perhaps the *real* lesson of Bosnia today, expressed in Huntingtonian terms? □

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3 *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 1993.



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